



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE
SKERRIES, 6

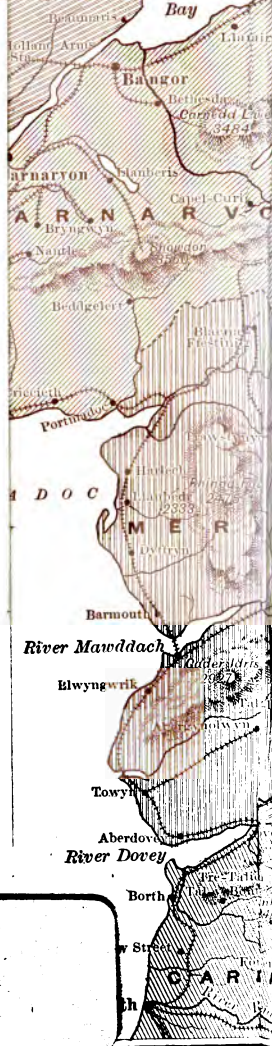
I R I



Harvard College Library

FROM

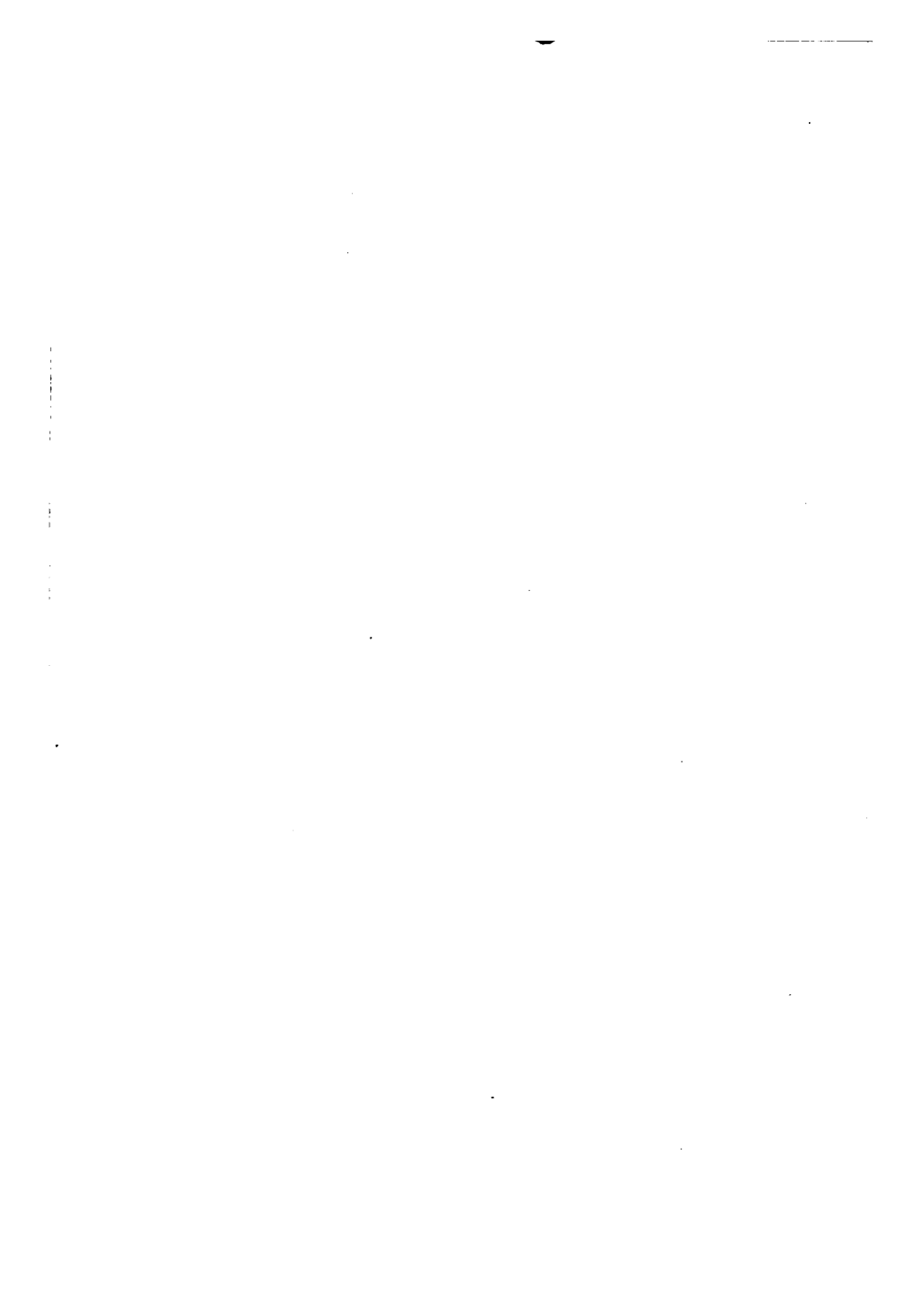
Dr. M. P. Apmadoc



0 5 10
Scale, -11 1/4 English Miles to 1 inch
----- Railroads

PETERS, ENGRS., BOSTON





By Jeannette Marks

GALLANT LITTLE WALES. Sketches of its
People, Places, and Customs. Illustrated.

THE END OF A SONG. Illustrated.

THROUGH WELSH DOORWAYS. Illustrated.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

Gallant Little Wales



THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN

Gallant Little Wales

*Sketches of its People, Places
and Customs*

BY JEANNETTE MARKS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1912

Br7219.12.2

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
DR. M. P. APMADOC
JULY 22, 1925

COPYRIGHT 1912, BY JEANNETTE MARKS

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published October 1912

CALON WRTH GALON



Preface

As a guidebook this volume will be found to contain too few unpronounceable Welsh place-names to be adequate, but as an introduction to the North Welsh land, its customs, its village life, its little churches, its holiday possibilities, its history and associations, its folk-lore and romance, its music, its cottages and castles, **GALLANT LITTLE WALES** should be useful. It is my intention to follow this book with a companion volume on South Wales.

I wish to express my debt to Mr. Henry Blackwell, who has always been quick to lend me volumes from his priceless Welsh library and who went over some of my manuscript for me. I am under obligations also to Rev. Gwilym O. Griffith of Carnarvonshire, North Wales. Thanks, too, I owe to Miss Dorothy Foster for her work upon the map which appears as a separate page in this volume.

The English know where beauty and comfort, good care, and good Welsh mutton are to be had for a moderate tariff. But long before the Englishman went for his vacations to these British

Preface

Alps and the American followed him, excursions were made into Wales. The Roman spent a summer holiday or so both in North and South Wales, and left there his villas and his fortresses and his roads. The Roman, having set or followed a good example — and who shall say which it was? — and having with Roman certainty got what he wanted, departed, leaving the country open to other invaders who pillaged and plundered. Nor, since that time, has the country ever been without an invader.

I, too, have gone my wonder-ways in Wales, plundering where I could. I, too, Celt and Celt again, have followed its beauty and felt a biting hunger for a land which, once loved, can never be forgotten. As did another Celt, William Morris, in his poems, so in prose this little book and I have wrought in an old garden, hoping to make “fresh flowers spring up from hoarded seed” and to bring back again — “back to folk weary” — some fragrance of old days and old deeds. Friendliness, solitude, memories, beauty for the eye and beauty for the ear, — he who would have one or all of these, let him go and go again to gallant little Wales.

JEANNETTE MARKS.

ATTIC PEACE, May 13, 1912.

Contents

I. WELSH WALES	3
II. A VILLAGE IN ERYRI	17
III. HILLTOP CHURCHES	30
IV. DR. JOHNSON'S TOUR OF NORTH WALES	59
V. WELSH FOLK-LORE	86
VI. THE CITY OF THE PRINCE OF WALES	105
VII. THE EISTEDDFOD	117
VIII. CAMBRIAN COTTAGES	133
IX. CASTLE AND ABBEYS IN NORTH • WALES	155
APPENDIX: SUGGESTIONS FOR SOME TOURS	177

1

Illustrations

THE LADIES OF LLANGOLLEN . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CONWAY CASTLE	10
From an old print.	
THE QUEEN'S TOWER, CONWAY CASTLE . .	24
From an engraving by Cuitt, 1817.	
THE GREAT HALL AT CONWAY CASTLE . .	32
From an engraving by Cuitt.	
ST. WINIFRED'S WELL, HOLYHEAD . . .	40
From an engraving by Cuitt, 1813.	
THE EAGLE TOWER OF CARNARVON CASTLE .	52
From an engraving by Cuitt.	
GATEWAY OF CARNARVON CASTLE . . .	66
From an engraving by Cuitt.	
A VIEW OF DENBIGH CASTLE	80
From an engraving by Boydell, 1750.	
RUTHIN CASTLE	92
From an engraving by Buck, 1742.	
THE COMPLEAT ANGLER IN WALES . . .	100

Illustrations

THE TOWER OF DOLBADARN ON LLANBERIS LAKE	112
LLANBERIS	124
From an old print.	
BEAUMARIS	140
From a proof before letters by Turner.	
A WELSH WATERFALL NEAR PENMAEN- MAWR	148
From an engraving by Boydell, 1750.	
BEDDGELERT	160
From an old print.	
THE SUMMIT OF SNOWDON	172
From an old print.	
MAP	<i>Inside front cover</i>

Gallant Little Wales

Gallant Little Wales

I

Welsh Wales

It is a vanished past that haunts the imagination in Wales, so that forever after in thoughts of that country one goes spellbound. It is the beautiful present, the cry of the sheep upon the mountain-sides, the church bells ringing from their little bell-cots and sounding sweetly in valleys and on highland meadows, the very flowers of the roadsides, — foxglove, bluebell, heather, — that keep one lingering in Wales or draw one back to that land again. There are little churches of twelfth-century foundation, gray or washed white, — their golden glowing saffron wash of long ago unrenewed by the Welsh of to-day. There are little cottages, white or yellow or pink, with their bright door-sills of copper, their clean, shining flagstones, their latticed windows, and all the homely and dignified tranquillity within. There, towering above, are bare rock-strewn summits upon which

Gallant Little Wales

the yew still stands, and, by its side, springing from the tuft of grass which the wind has not swept away, grows the white harebell; the yew monument to a thousand years, the harebell a fragile thing of yesterday. And above these church-crowned hills are mountain summits, gray and craggy, stripped of everything verdant, places where there are "shapes that haunt thought's wilderness," and suggestions of an endless, unending journey.

It was Bishop Baldwin, I think, accompanied on his famous twelfth-century journey through Cambria by Gerald of Wales, who said, getting his breath with difficulty as he surmounted a Welsh hill, "The nightingale followed wise counsel and never came into Wales." Were this true, the reply might be that Wales has no need of nightingales, so many and so beautiful are the wind-played songs over the rocks, and so incomparably lovely are the voices of the Welsh people themselves. In any event, *had* the nightingales come into Wales, a plump one — as it seems Bishop Baldwin himself must have been — would never have remained long in the mountain fastnesses of northern Wales, — at least not in the neighbourhood of Snowdon

Welsh Wales

or Nant Francon or Twll Ddu, — the “black hole” of Wales. Neither, if Bishop Baldwin ever climbed to a Welsh mountain-top, would this princely prelate have liked the views there. A comfortable, fat living in some Welsh community like Valle Crucis Abbey, near the river Dee, by Llangollen, would probably have been far more to his liking. Even now these mountain inns are not of the accepted kind, but merely a cromlech over which the wind still plays its devil tunes, a cave or the ridgepole of a long sharp mountain crest, broken by crags down to the very edge of the sea.

Wales is a land of mountains, of little alpine heights ranged on the western coast of Great Britain. Set between plain and sea, full of hill fastnesses, its turbulent history is partly explained by the topography of Gwalia. Independence, lack of unity, — these words summarize most of the early history of Wales. To the different parts of Cambria, alpine Snowdonia, the pasture lands of Berwyn, the moorlands and vast coal-fields of the south, came two races: one short and dark, the Iberian; the other tall and fair, the Celtic. These are still the two peoples of Wales. And after them came Rome;

Gallant Little Wales

but Rome is gone, has vanished, except for her walls and foundations and roads, and these dark and fair races are still there, mingled, their racial traits still impregnable, still intact.

When you add to what might be called the natural and inherent difficulties of the necessary mountain climbing in Wales, those of the Welsh language, you have a combination that is beyond words to describe. Even the veriest tyro a-visiting Wales will tell you that the language defies all description and the most conscientious efforts to master it.

One warm day we were making a melancholy progress up a mountain-side when steps passed swiftly and a voice said in Welsh, "Stepping upwards?" The young man, an itinerant Welsh minister, was travelling in the same direction with us and it did not seem polite to say "Good-bye," although I could think of no other Welsh words. Finally two inept ones came to me, "Da iawn" (very good), and I spoke them. But then, not content to let well enough alone, something more had to be said and I kept on repeating those words like a parrot. The Welshman looked around doubtfully, as if he wondered what the "Very good" was all about, and I

Welsh Wales

heard him murmuring to himself and saw him hasten upwards a little faster.

"Say something else," my companion whispered.

"I am going to if you will just give me time," I snapped back.

But I did n't say anything else; I could n't, for not another thing would come. If any one feels disposed to criticize an alien because he is unable to speak Welsh, then let him go test its difficulties for himself, its long words, its savage consonants, its poor little vowels lost like some bleating lamb upon rocky mountain-sides. You just get it satisfactorily settled in your own mind that "Dad" means father, — very natural and proper, — when suddenly you discover that "Tad" and "Nhad" and "Thad" also mean father and are one and the same word. With mother or "Mam" you suffer a similar though not the same fate. To begin with, the Cymric alphabet differs from ours: it consists of thirty-one letters, some of which, "mh," "ch," "dd," "ff," "ng," "ngh," "ll," "nh," "ph," "rh," "th," never occur in the English alphabet as letters *per se*. Your honest grammarian will tell you flatly that in the case of "ll" there is no sound

Gallant Little Wales

in any language corresponding to it. Most like it are the Spanish "ll" and the Italian "gl." Then what to do? Do as you would have to do in rope skipping: watch the rope, run and jump in if you can. The "c" is hard in Welsh, never soft like "c" in "city"; "ch" is like the guttural German "ch"; the "dd" sometimes like "eth"; "f" like "v"; "ff" like "f"; "g" is never soft as in "giant," but like "g" in "get"; "i," both long and short, as "i" in "pin" and "ee" in "fleet"; "o" is short like "o" in "got" or long like "o" in "note"; "p" as in English; "s" is like "s" in "sin"; "u" is sometimes like "i" and sometimes not; the "w" is like "u"; "y" has two sounds, first like "u" in "fur," second like the Welsh "u." A few words will illustrate Welsh pronunciation. "Cymru" is pronounced, as nearly as one can suggest its pronunciation, as if spelled "Kumree"; "Gwallia" as if "Gooalia"; "Mawddwy" as if "Mauthooy"; "Wnion" as if "Oonion"; "Pwllheli" as if "Pooltheli"; "Dolgelley" as if "Dolgethley."

I have had some experiences with my "small" Welsh which I would not exchange for those of "big" German in the past, or of any other

Welsh Wales

language in which I have been trained to read or speak. I remember one experience that happened when we were in search of a certain little church of ancient foundation, set upon a hill-top. In Wales there are many of these little churches on the hilltops, like Llanrychwyn and Llangelynin, and also little churches by the sea, like Llandanwg, almost at the foot of Harlech. Within their mediæval lychgates and high stone walls the dead are crowded close in their last sleep. Sweet places are those old churches, with the yew standing sentinel near them, and about them the shelter of the valley or the wide sweep of the hilltop view. This time it was a hilltop church for which we were searching. Again it was "Da iawn" which graced the conversation, but in how different a manner!

✓ We were in need of tea, and at the cottage next to the church, the only cottage upon that summit, I rapped with my stick and said to the old woman who came, "Dyma le da i gael te" (this is a good place to have tea).

"Yiss," was her reply, her face brightening; "Te?"

"Yes," said I; "tea and bread-and-butter."

Gallant Little Wales

"Jam?" asked she, remembering what I had forgotten.

"Yes," I answered.

She spread the cover in the place on the turf to which we pointed and smiled brightly at me, as if she, too, appreciated the beauty of that place with its wide mountain and valley landscape, the trustful sheep browsing near me, and down at our feet the magnificent pile of Harlech Castle looking across the wide flat marsh at its feet and over the sea toward the palace of King Mark.

"Da iawn" (very good), said I emphatically.

And her answering smile told me that we understood each other, even if we could not speak each other's language very well.

Changeling Welsh words are begot of elves and fairies. Even as those words are full of poetry, of romance, of a wild emotionalism, — the "Scream of the Celt" it has been called, but in Wales it is a subdued scream, — so, still, are the superstitions about fairies and elves living among these Welsh hills and valleys. Childish tales they may seem to you, if you are fortunate enough to be told anything about them at all by the Welsh peasants, who are both sus-



CONWAY CASTLE

From an old print

Welsh Wales

picious and shy of the "foreigner." The tales one may hear even now in Wales are full of a haunting race life. The Welsh speak of the fairies as the "little folk" or the "fair folk" or "family" — "y Tylwyth Teg." And well do these little creatures deserve the name, for they are friendly in Wales. Ghosts there are, too, and the death portents, the old hag of the mist and others that groan or moan or sing or stamp with their feet. And there are "Corpse Candles" and "Goblin Funerals." Shakespeare knew a deal about Welsh folk-lore, but where he got it from no one has yet discovered. With Shakespeare "mab" meant a little thing, just as in any Welsh village to-day "mabcath" means a kitten.

No matter where I have been I have found the Welsh conscious of the beauty and significance of their land, its legendary lore, its history, its marvellous natural attraction. They have always been eager to give me information about some landmark, some incident about which I might be inquiring. Over their shop counters, across the doorsills of the humblest of Welsh cottages, by some kitchen fire where the brass tea-kettle sang and glowed in the subdued light of the ingle, they have poured forth titles of

Gallant Little Wales

books and data, — things for which I was searching, or needed to know. One old man, eighty-six years old and bedridden, held my hand in an eager, childish clasp, while he tried to tell me something about a church, the poor tired mind working like a rundown clock, the half-sightless eyes looking at me in petition to help him recall the days that had slipped so far away. He asked me about friends of his, — people who had died before I had thought of being born. He corrected my few words of Welsh, a ghost of a smile about the old mouth, but he could not recollect what I wanted to know. Without the information I was seeking, I went away saying “Nos da” to him, which was, indeed, good night.

When Dr. Samuel Johnson made his memorable tour of Wales, he wrote, “Wales is so little different from England that it offers nothing to the speculations of the traveller.” He seemed wholly oblivious to the strong racial difference between Welsh and English, which alters not only the visage of the people, but also the visage of the very country. He was so indifferent to the grandeur of Snowdon scenery that, going around the base of that mountain of

Welsh Wales

eagles in a chaise, he spent his time keeping account of the number of sheep for "Miss Thrale," — his little favourite "Queenie." I do not believe that Johnson's disgust would have been the least appeased by knowing that in the years to come other great people were to go and go again to Wales, as to a beloved lap of rest: Wordsworth, Shelley, Kingsley, Froude, Newman, Huxley, Tyndall, Tennyson, Arnold, Tom Taylor, John Bright, Carmen Sylva, and many another. The good Doctor scorned Welsh rivers, called them brooks and offered to jump over them. He would have despised such a cottage kitchen as I have lingered in many a time impressed by its beautiful and dignified simplicity. Sweet places are these old kitchens, hospitable, warm, cheerful. Sunlight or firelight, one or the other, you may have always in them. Bright they are with fuchsias and little gleaming leaded window-panes, with polished oak and polished brass and copper, with the shining face of a grandfather clock, with pewter, with lustre pitchers and creamers, with gleaming pots and kettles, and the salt glistening on bacons and hams hanging from the blackened oak rafters. Gay are they, too, with the life and laughter

Gallant Little Wales

of children, with the good cheer of contented older people, with the purr of the house cat and the bubbling of the tea-kettle. More homelike, more motherly, more charming old kitchens, it has never been my good fortune to see.

There was only one thing in Wales which profoundly satisfied the great Doctor and that was its castles, Harlech and Conway, and Carnarvon Castle most of all. Almost every Welsh town has its historical traditions of importance, but Carnarvon, the city of the Prince of Wales, even more than others. There Elen, the Great Welsh roadmaker, was sought and won by the Emperor Maximus. Of that little city, once the Roman city of Segontium, there is a description in the "Mabinogion," the classic of Welsh literature and one of the classics of the world. The Roman Emperor saw in his dream but what we see now, a fair and mighty castle, rocks, precipices, mountains of great height. The Prince of Wales was born, according to legend, in Carnarvon Castle, and there investiture ceremonies are still held. But veracious history assures us that he was born in the town, outside the castle of which he himself had built the very tower where he was supposed to have been born.

Welsh Wales

Tumultuous, confused, legendary is Welsh history, full of the more or less mythical deeds of their great King Arthur, their brave Prince Llewelyn, the fate that overtook the hopes and ideals of this prince, their last fight for independence and their loss of it; their submission to the yoke of conquerors and the history of English princes who were put over them. It is a wild, sad, eventful history whose sorrows and tragedies seem only to have bitten all that is most Cymric in Welsh Wales deeper into Welsh lives and hearts, so that to-day, despite all that conqueror or civilization can do, their language, their lives, are still separate.

And the Welsh Eisteddfod, a festival of song and poetry, is a revelation of the unique national Welsh spirit. From every hamlet in Wales, even those reached only by Welsh ponies, visitors travel on foot or by train to this feast of song and to witness the Gorsedd, a druidical ceremony old as the Eye of Light itself. "Gallant little Wales" shows itself to the least and last participant in the Eisteddfod as Welsh Wales. Educationally this Eisteddfod ceremony is of great value to Wales, democratic, representative, instructive; and nowhere

Gallant Little Wales

could the fact that Welsh educational ideals are quite different from those of England — popular and progressive, with something of the so-called American spirit in them — reveal itself more completely than in this assembly of the people. Wales is essentially a democracy — a democracy of song, a democracy of poetry, a democracy of education and religion, and the Eisteddfod is the popular university of the people. To comprehend what is deepest and best in Welsh Wales one must go to the Eisteddfod and hear the Welsh, sensitive, capable of the “Hwyl,” imaginative, passionate, fervidly patriotic, sing, —

HEN WLAD FY NHADAU (OLD LAND OF MY FATHERS)

“Old mountain-built Cymru, the bard’s Paradise,
The farm in the cwm, the wild crag in the skies,
The river that winds, have entwined tenderly
With a love spell my spirit in me.

Chorus : Land, Land,
Too fondly I love thee, dear Land,
Till warring sea and shore be gone,
Pray God let the old tongue live on.”

II

A Village in Eryri

"Curates mind the parish,
Sweepers mind the court,
We 'll away to Snowdon,
For our ten days' sport."

Kingsley's Letter to Tom Hughes.

At the centre of a wide meadow with valleys running in towards the centre from east and south and west lies a little village of North Wales. All the cottages are gray, gray as the stones of St. John's, but they are of the crisp, compact gray of slate, and not the crumbling, fretted stone of Oxford. Occasionally some cottage nestling to the craggy side of one of the valley roads is whitewashed with white or pink, or fitted so neatly into the jutting rocks of the mountain-side that only the humble façade, a screen of blooming roses, is visible. Whitewash, roses, gleam of copper doorsills, running water, flash gaily in the midst of the gray of Beddgelert. Above the houses is the blue roadway of sky walled in by craggy mountain-summits, the sides of the mountains carpeted with

Gallant Little Wales

myriad tufts of heather, lavender or purple or pink, and in autumn with the vivid yellow of the prickly gorse. Bees desert tiny gardens of well-hedged roses for this wide principality of bracken and heather, where around tufted blossoms they hum to the tossing of some stream casting itself down the hills. Up the rocks clamber ivy and sheep; about the moist edges of the pools and over the cushions of damp moss, black and brown watered-silk snails measure leisurely in well-fed content; and in little terraced glens of thick sod and along the roadways grow bluebells and columbine and foxglove and elfin white birches. But above these troops of upland bluebells and slender, swaying birches hang rocks, wild, rugged, whipped bare even of heather. And from the rough spine of Craig-y-Llan stretches away towards Snowdon and Pen-y-Pass, a wilderness of naked rocks, weird, jagged, shining gray and black in utter desolation.

At the meeting of the Colwyn and Gwynen rivers, with the hollow sound of rushing water in its village lanes and the tinkling of sheep bells scattering from the overhanging hills, the meadow strips lie beside the valley roads, deep

A Village in Eryri

green with abundant grass or yellow with grain. Life, however, has been strenuous in this village of fourscore mountain huts, and many fathers and sons have had to labour to clear the grassy fields. For these honest, independent, thrifty Welshmen, slate and sheep are the chief means of support. The rivers yield, too, a fair quantity of salmon as pink as some of the mountain huts, salmon weighing from one to eighteen pounds. In a flood, although the torrent sometimes reduces the number of inhabitants, the catch of salmon is greater, and the villagers face the delicate task of balancing an all-wise but unscrupulous Providence.

The way to a Welshman's heart, nevertheless, is not through his stomach; the Welsh think but little of what they eat. Before English tourists came to the village the inns of the place, Ty Ucha—now the Saracen's Head—and Ty Isaf, provided a bill of fare consisting of oat and barley bread, ale, porter, and eggs. English and Americans, unlike the Welsh, do not go lightly on a holiday without consideration of what there will be to eat. And our lodging-table, set by as kindly and generous a hostess as three wanderers ever found, bore slender chickens whose pro-

Gallant Little Wales

portions suggested mountain climbing, mutton tender as the ivy the poor sheep had been nibbling, salmon trout fresh as the stream pouring by the corner of our cottage, Glan Afon, pound-cake filled with plums, and tawny mountain honey. And, too, there were vegetables for whose mere names we felt a careless indifference. Even the loaf of bread Baucis and Philemon set before their wanderers was no better, I am certain, than the bread of Beddgelert, light, sweet, with crackly golden-brown crust. Often have we done nothing but watch—and joy enough it was—the mammoth loaves coming home from the village bakery across the village bridge, little children staggering under them, small boys bearing them jauntily, mothers grasping them firmly under one arm, a baby tucked away under the other.

At the inns, of which the Royal Goat is most pretentious,—it has a piano,—there is much quiet holiday life led by quiet holiday people. The simple folk who come to stay are for the most part the Welsh people themselves, for whom Beddgelert is in the nature of a shrine, a place canonized by the brave deed of one of their own Welsh greyhounds, Prince Llewelyn's

A Village in Eryri

Gelert. The visitors who travel through the valley during the holiday month of August are English and Welsh tourists on the coaches driving over Llanberis Pass, said to be the highest coach drive in the world, and going to Carnarvon, the ancient Roman city of Segontium, fourteen miles distant from Beddgelert.

In the last hundred years the village has harboured many a distinguished man who, giving thanks for his undiscovered seclusion, has come and gone unknown. Wordsworth came there with his friend, Robert Jones; Shelley, living at Tan yr Allt, a few miles out of Beddgelert, must often have passed through its lanes, his ragged brown hair whipped by the valley wind, his great eyes blue as the roadway of sky overhead; Kingsley, with a quick smile for the jolly little urchins perched venturesomely on the sharp slate coping of the bridge, Frederic Temple, Derwent Coleridge, J. A. Froude, Professor F. W. Newman, Huxley, Tyndall, all found holiday rest in this quiet meadow sheltered by its rampart of mountains. Gladstone came there, too. A village cow with an eye for distinction endeavoured to hook the Prime Minister and had afterwards the satisfaction of being sold for

Gallant Little Wales

a large sum of money. There also in the valley was born "Golden Rule" Jones, of Toledo fame, a good man, and but one of many good men who have gone forth from this fastness of peace to dream ever afterwards of a return to its gray houses, its streams, its hills and heather and wilderness of crags.

Ty Isaf and Ty Ucha are the oldest inns of the village. Ty Isaf is at the entrance of the lane leading to the church, and it was there, not so many years ago, that the minister was still expected to drink a cup or two of ale before entering the pulpit or fail in due prelusive inspiration. At Ty Isaf was kept the Large Pint of Beddgelert ("Hen Beint Mawr Bedd Gelert"), a pewter mug which held two quarts of old beer. Any man who could drink this quantity at a breath might charge the amount to the lord of the manor; if he failed, he paid for it himself. But so often was the heroic deed accomplished by capacious Welshmen that it is recorded the tenants paid but half their rent in money. It would be interesting to know for how many goblins, fairies, "Lantern Jacks," flickering "Candles of the Dead," Hen Beint Mawr was responsible! Now over every little

A Village in Eryri

inn is the sign "Temperance," for Welsh revivals have played havoc with these noble drinking-feats. One signboard, I can never pass without a smile, has gone so far as rather to insist upon the temperance issue in the words, "Rooms and Temperance." Incidentally, the rector of the Episcopal Church has given up his potation, and next door the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist minister, also unsupported by home-brewed beer, wrestles with his flock. Beddgelert Sabbath-keeping has all the force of an unbroken tradition. A gentleman riding a-hunting on Sunday was confronted by an old woman who shook her Welsh Bible at him and showered vindictive Welsh *P's* on his worldly head. Nor was our own experience much happier. Our drinking-water was fetched from Ty Ucha, and we had good reason to believe it was responsible for wretched feelings. One Sunday morning I consulted our Welsh hostess, explained to her what we thought of the water, and asked whether we might have some brought from another spring. We were told that it could not be drawn on the Sabbath, but would be brought to us on Monday morning! In every cottage there is a mammoth Welsh Bible,

Gallant Little Wales

and groups of smaller Bibles both Welsh and English. We went into one deserted mountain hut to take pictures of the interior; inside, together with an old trunk, a rusty fluting-iron, kettles, pans, a portion of the woven couch strung over the wide fireplace, and old clothes, we found two Welsh Bibles, one English Bible, and a torn portion of "Pilgrim's Progress."

Indeed, the religious spirit of the place is a tradition but infrequently broken in the past thousand years. Edward I had burned the priory (now St. Mary's Church), which was erected as a hospitium in connexion with a small chapel and schoolhouse in the second half of the sixth century; Henry VIII endeavoured to crush its power, and then in 1830 the good villagers themselves entered upon the pious task of renovation. In order to make the renovation as thorough as possible, they tore down all the rare wood-carving, using it for kindling-wood, and in some instances making pieces of household furniture from it; they put in a false ceiling of clapboards hiding the fine Gothic arch of the roof; the ceiling, together with the walls, they whitewashed, and completed their pious task by boarding up several exquisitely shaped



THE QUEEN'S TOWER, CONWAY CASTLE

From an engraving by Cuitt, 1817

A Village in Eryri

lancet windows. Fortunately the renovation has been followed by a restoration, and now the priory may be seen in some of its ancient beauty, with the old yew tree spreading low over the gravestones and the Gwynen pouring by its northern walls, singing the same mountain song it sang when the canons regular of St. Augustine, barefooted, gray-habited, with crucifix and rosary, marched solemnly from chapel to hospitium.

The name Beddgelert, the Grave of Gelert (?), brings hundreds of Welsh people to see this town each year. It is not an uncommon spectacle to see a man, as he stands by the dog's grave, brushing away tears, or a little child crying bitterly. The story is of Prince Llewelyn's greyhound, who saved his master's baby by killing a fierce wolf, and then was slain by his master's sword, for the Prince, entering, saw the cradle overturned and the greyhound's mouth covered with blood. The name of the place, however, has nothing to do with the myth of Gelert; the little hill on which the grave stands had for hundreds of years been called "Bryn-y-Bedd," the "Hill of the Grave," a mound where the Irish chief Celert, a far

Gallant Little Wales

earlier hero than the dog, may have been buried. There are parallels in other folk-lore for this tale, and one even in the Sanscrit has been discovered in which, in place of Northern wolf, a snake is the evil agent. There is an unmistakable twinkle in a Beddgelert eye whenever the story is told. Alas! that the greyhound buried there was not presented to Prince Llewelyn by his father-in-law, King John, in the year 1205, but, the petted possession of two Beddgelert spinsters, was presented by them at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the sagacious David Prichard, the first owner of the Royal Goat Hotel, and promptly interred by him in the famous mound.

Every one of the three valley roads of Beddgelert is filled with incidents of Welsh legend and folk-lore. Even in our materialistic age the credulous spirit abides here in this mountain-bred people, quick, lively, romantic. The village is filled with lovely legend and quaint lore; in the farmhouses among the hills heroic stories are still told about Arthur and songs sung to Welsh melodies. There are tales of ghosts, and of goblins, brown road goblins, and gray goblins of the mist; of water sprites in the

A Village in Eryri

mountain torrents, now a beautiful, half-naked maiden, now a fleshless old man; of the "Candle of the Dead" with its clear white flame; of the little red-eyed, red-eared "Hounds of Hell" flocking like sheep down some mountain-path; of the pranks of "Lantern Jack" on dark winter nights; of the fairies living in the summer among the bracken, in winter among heather and gorse, coming out of their haunts to dive thievishly into the farmers' pockets, or to steal butter and milk and cheese from the careful housewives. There are stories, too, of amiable, kindly fairies who carol and dance nightly.

Driving up from Tremadoc past Tan yr Allt, where Shelley lived for a year, one comes to the bridge at the mouth of the pass. This bridge is said to have been built by no less a person than the Devil, who for his trouble got nothing in toll but a poor little dog that was first to scamper over it. Down the Nant Gwynen Valley, a narrow river valley running east out of Beddgelert, is Dinas Emrys, the home of the magician Merlin and at many times the abiding place of King Arthur. Merlin's well, on the very summit of Dinas Emrys, is still a discoverable well. There, too, surrounding the crown

Gallant Little Wales

of this singular hill, are traces and remains of the walls of an old Roman fortress; and the entrance over the narrow ridge to the crown of Dinas Emrys bears marks of stone hewn hundreds of years ago. Not more than three miles further in the same valley is a precipitous pass leading up towards Lliwedd by Snowdon, where some legends say Arthur fell and lies buried. Up this valley road over Pen y Pass, in a wilderness of boulders and crags tumbled hither and thither, is an interesting specimen of cromlech, and near by some gigantic rocks so fitted together that they form a hut in which an old woman is said to have lived many, many years. I hope life was pleasanter to her during all those years than it was for us during even the few minutes we were within the strange enclosure.

The third valley running out of Beddgelert is the valley of the Colwyn. This leads past Moel Hebog — in a cave on whose perpendicular side Owen Glendwr lay in hiding for months — towards Carnarvon, a city of a castle with casements : —

“ Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

A Village in Eryri

There lying before one over the summer sea is the rim of Anglesey, quiet in its mirage of white sand and the green land stretching away into gray distance. Still many portions of the old Roman road connecting Segontium and Heriri Mons may be seen in this valley, bridle-paths the Welsh call "Ffyrdd Elen," "Elen's Roads." Towering above, Snowdon looks down, untroubled, from its splendid reach, upon these paths, from which, in sunshine and in mist, Druid and Roman, henchman of Edward and John, prince and poet and painter, have made the steep ascent and seen swimming before them, like the sea of time, a hundred hills; beyond, the wide glimmer of the ocean; and heard rising through the air the roar of torrent and stream. Halfway up Snowdon are the remains of a druidical temple. There, kneeling on some of the stones, I listened to the song of wind and sea, the Harp of Eryri, and tried to catch a little of the vast panorama, which was, somehow, strangely, mournfully human, holding in sky-line and sea-line dim shadow of the hearts which had knelt here before — the immemorial worshippers of untold beauty.

III

Hilltop Churches

“AH,” said Bishop Baldwin, recovering his breath, “the nightingale followed wise counsel and never came into Wales.” So, jocund as the most unordained, Baldwin’s holy company of the twelfth century moved on its way, gathering ever more and more to it cloaks signed with the crusading cross of red. To mind come other figures and to mind come other pictures — wild, powerful, beautiful, pathetic — of a past that is a thousand or two thousand years old. In some rock-strewn valley, bleak and barren as the uttermost parts of the earth or terrible as the valley of the shadow of death, rises the cry of human sacrifice. Hundreds of years later, down a road-way bordered then as now with foxglove and bluebells and heather, rides a gallant company, gentle-mannered, on pleasure bent. Or by the walls of Conway Castle, Edward I bears the body of his Eleanor to its far resting-place in Westminster Abbey, where the stones are still fresh from the chisels of the builders. Here is “the

Hilltop Churches

unimaginable touch of Time," a Past that as it slips away joins the mystery of a Future even at this instant in retreat.

But the traveller does not go on foot week after week many scores of miles, with these thoughts always present, like Christian with a pack upon his back, and meeting as did Christian many difficulties. True, a good heart faces the open road expecting many obstacles, and can find its wonder-ways even if it loses a night's rest. Giraldus Cambrensis, on the forward march with the Bishop through Wales, could vouch for an island in which no one dies, for a wandering bell, for a whale with three golden teeth, for grasshoppers that sing better when their heads are cut off. He tells the story of a lad, Sisillus Long Leg by name, who suffered a violent persecution from toads that in the end consumed the young man to the very bones. And like most ecclesiastics, Giraldus allows himself the relaxation of a good fish story.

This credulity, charming as it is and panacea for the physical tedium of the open road, is the faculty of which the pedestrian of to-day must strip himself. No other pilgrimages of which I know have been made to these little churches,

Gallant Little Wales

except by Mr. Herbert North, of Wales, — who has studied the old churches of Arllechwyd simply, and to whose architectural insight I am greatly indebted, — and by myself. During many weeks my journey took me from hillside to hillside and mountain-top to mountain-top, studying these ancient foundations. My work was grounded upon incredulity; everything was recorded, nothing concluded. As a motto the remark of the only thoughtful sexton I have met out of literature might have been taken. Contemplating an old stone at St. Mary, Conway, inscribed “Y 1066,” he said, “Hit wants a wise ’ead to find hit out.” At Gyffin beyond Conway we pointed to one object after another in the church with the single question — an American question: —

“How old is it?”

“It’s very old, mum,” came the reply.

“How old?”

“Oh, very old, mum,” in an impressive voice.

Having tested barrel vault, paintings, chancel, windows, rood screen, roof, walls, doors, in this fashion, we had worked ourselves out of the church, so to speak, and I pointed up to a shiny tin rooster crowing upon the bell-cot.



THE GREAT HALL AT CONWAY CASTLE

From an engraving by Cuiitt

Hilltop Churches

"How old is it, the rooster?" I said.

"Oh, very old, mum," came the solemn reply.

At another place we were told that the bell swinging in the cot, and sounding sweetly after the long journey uphill, dated from the fourth century. It was useless to inform the poor soul that there were none but hand-bells then in North Wales, and that she was in this case only a little matter of one thousand years out of the way. After a mount up to Llangelynin, taken hastily, and much investigation of objects genuinely ancient, the woman who had us in thrall said, pointing to a dark recess under a narrow, fixed pew, black as darkness, and not more than one foot from the pew in front of it, "There's a very old tablet there, mum, my son says." Perhaps she had calculated the discrepancy between the width of the pew and myself; however, I got through to the floor, wiped off the dust with a handkerchief, and out blinked, as sleepily as if it were the very Rip Van Winkle of stones, the young date 1874! Wild steeple chases there were in plenty, with minor fatalities to limb and courage. It is useless, when one mountain-top has been achieved, to find that after all there is nothing left except the incon-

Gallant Little Wales

siderable mountain itself, — it is useless then to discover upon an opposite summit, whose peak could be reached by a well-modulated voice, an extant church of indubitable antiquity, for to meet with that church would require an all-day's walk. There was one steeple chase without even the comfort of another church in view.

Once reconciled to these surprises, for which no one can be held accountable, and to the ineffectiveness of the sextons whom no one must suppose responsible, there are no chances for disappointments except such as are self-created. The attendants in most cases are women, and wretched creatures some of them are. In one place a woman with a goitre, and one eye gone, kept the keys. She was admirably proud of her son because he did know something, but as the son spent all his days in a mine we were not in a way to inherit his wisdom. Another woman was deaf and dumb and foolish. A lad who took us through a church of considerable importance, if antiquity can make these deserted churches important, was so stupid he received a lecture upon his ignorance. His unanswerable sectarian reply was that he did not belong to that church anyway. We met with some smart young girls

Hilltop Churches

who, with their twenty years of wisdom, were above knowledge concerning anything so rusty and tumble-down as the church by means of which they hoped to win sixpences for ribbons. There were two or three apple-cheeked old women clad in caps and bobbing their curtsies. To one, a sweet old soul, I was explaining that a certain door could not be very ancient and have the big nails it had in it. "Uch," she replied, in distress. "Well, indeed, mum, perhaps they were put in later to hold it together." It may be said, I think, that the keys are kept as far away as possible, why I cannot say. So is the vicar kept as far away as possible: even the curates get the habit and stay away when they can. As a rule, the churches are not set down in the midst of habitable villages, but most often upon remote hillsides or hilltops. There is another difficulty to be encountered also, in the person of the kindly individual who could show you what you wish, but wishes to show you something else. One old woman — the Ancient Mariner himself could not have been more irresistible — detained us endlessly while she searched for and displayed the Duchess of Westminster's photograph.

Gallant Little Wales

These are some of the troubles in a progress otherwise enchanting; once realized, it is well to forget them, together with the feet that were sometimes too weary to travel five miles further and the shoulder that ached under the strap. With its ache of all the ages the dream of ancient beauty has no place in it for an hour's weariness. As if the riddle of existence could be explained by a wall rain-washed and worn, upon which grow lichen, moss, rustling grass, and even trees, and by lintels tipping earthward, golden flowers blowing upon them! The eye travels thirstily from stone to stone, or to some peaceful bell-cot pointing the bare ridge of a bleak, sheep-covered hill, or to the far-away hills and gray sky and solemn, dreary places. Spiritually it is easy to understand why these churches are on the hills, and the controversy about their position seems a matter of no further moment. There are other pictures, too, of churches by the sea, in the main not as old as those upon the mountains, enclosures where even the tombstones are crowded together in their last sleep. Beyond these churchyards lies the encircling shore with ever the white lip of the sea at its edge; above, low-lying regiments of clouds

Hilltop Churches

march Snowdon-wards. Upon one eminence is the church, upon another, nearer the water, a castle, and in the valley between these crumbling sanctities of power and spirit is the little town, busy still, its roofs making a joyous show of colour beneath the blue sky. Within these churches by the sea there is ever the tideless roar of the waters ringing upon the shores, and from these church doorways the eye dreams upon the castle wasting with the land at its feet, or the "llys" of King Mark, or upon the faint blue rim of some island, holy as the mother of good men. Along the road on one side is the sea; on the other, green hills rise into the blue of the sky, their slopes a mosaic of gray sheep walls. And here out of the village at the end of a grass-grown road, by the sea, lies a little church, around which the sands have blown through so many centuries that the windows show just the caps looking like sleepy eyes out of the huddled graves. One minute time rolls like a chariot wheel crushing all things, another moment and it is a mystic circle without beginning and without end. The graves upon the hillsides, young in their hundreds of years, look down upon the mounds of the British undisturbed in

Gallant Little Wales

a millennial repose, and upon a stone lying as hands two thousand years ago placed it. And past the ears rush the centuries of all eternity, as in the travelling of a mighty wind.

Seeing with the eye of visions it is not hard to recreate a vanished past, to construct again the primitive British church of wood and wattle, with its beauty of oaken rafter and carved wood which stone now encloses. There is still an ancient wooden church in Greenstead, Essex, in plan much like little churches of North Wales, — the walls six feet high made of half trees side by side, the roof a tie beam, with struts, less than six feet from the floor. This parallelogram follows out the double square of what was undoubtedly the plan of the ancient British church, something that was still geometrically the square sanctuary with its square altar typifying the heavenly Jerusalem. Bede, in his “Ecclesiastical History,” speaks of “a church fit for an Episcopal See ; which, however, after the manner of the Scots, he [Finan] did not erect of stone, but of sawn timber, covering it with reeds.” It is worth remembering that the little churches being discussed are unique examples of a national type based, not

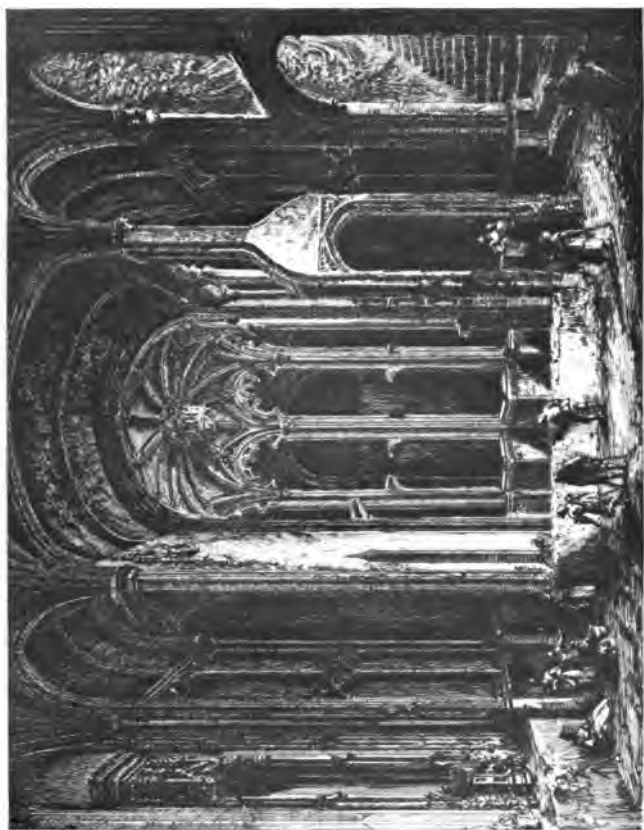
Hilltop Churches

upon the Roman basilica, but upon the Temple, with its square Holy of Holies, and illustrating certain features; a square east end with east window, an altar concealed behind screens, and a south door instead of a western portal. The wood and wattle churches have disappeared, but upon the foundation lines have arisen the present stone churches of North Wales, dating back in general to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Their walls of stone are daubed at the joints with mud, similar to the treatment the wattle buildings had received, and the whole whitewashed inside and out. The roof, later covered with oaken shingles and now with soft-coloured slates, was in the Middle Ages thatched deeply with reed or straw. At the east end was the small slit window, and at the south end a door so low that even a short person must stoop to enter it. Originally there were no bell turrets or porches, and at the eastern gable merely a wooden cross. Inside, a screen divided the building in half, the squints covered by veils, and several doors opening into the altar space. Probably the screen was decorated with painting as the barrel vaults came to be. Within and without, the sanctuary

Gallant Little Wales

gleamed pure white. The Saxons learned the use of whitewash from the British, and St. Wilfrid gloried in having washed the York Minster of his day "whiter than snow."

As the cottages, coloured white or yellow or pink, are seen nestling against the hills of Wales, one regrets that the church no longer receives as in olden days the same treatment. With the wash worn from the churches and never renewed, the country has lost in picturesque beauty. How pretty these buildings must have looked, with their steep thatched roofs and white bell-cots gleaming in the midst of dark yews, or perhaps some golden-tinted church glowing like a crocus in the midst of pines. Not only have the colours faded, as if the land were some bright missal turning gray, but the odd circular huts with their conical thatched roofs, in which the natives once lived, have tumbled down. In those days was a beautiful hospitality, the host and hostess serving until all were served, and in these rude dwellings the ancient harp was played; and from the wooden book, its revolving square crossbars inscribed with letters or notes of music, were read the ancient song and poetry of Wales.



ST. WINIFRED'S WELL, HOLYHEAD
From an engraving by Cuiitt, 1813

Hilltop Churches

When the rectangular cottage came in it did not differ greatly from the circular hut. There were windows—"wind-eyes"—covered with a wooden lattice and shutter, the walls smoothly plastered, and the interior made less primitive by the use of three-legged tables and chairs. Still later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the one space was divided off into kitchen, chamber, and loft, the kitchen open to the roof and airy, healthful, and clean. Hospitality was sacred then; any man might enter a dwelling, and delivering up his arms stay as long as he would.

The church was but another sanctuary in olden days where men could take refuge from sin or foe. The "llan," which is the prefix to fully eight tenths of all the names of ancient churches in North Wales, means "enclosure." Probably in these places were the earliest monastic settlements, at a time when the "llan," as the Irish "rath," enclosed habitation as well as sanctuary. But as the years brought about greater specification in the functions of church and state the term narrowed itself down and was applied solely to the church. The old churchyard walls are still more or less circular like British fort

Gallant Little Wales

walls. Llangelynin has an enclosure that undoubtedly follows the old lines. The walls of the churchyard near Holyhead are extremely ancient, seventeen feet high and six feet thick. This masonry, from the presence of certain round towers and the particular plastering used, is known to be Roman. Set away from the world that is "too much with us," these enclosures are charming old spaces, habitable in a sweet sense. The grass looks peace into tired eyes, and to eyes eager with plans rest here is merely an emphasis upon the joy of living. And here, as the stiles into the close show, the children play and have played from generation to generation. Here they climbed upon the roof, and here against the north and west walls, where burials are never made, they played ball and scratched upon the stone their scoring-marks.

At Llangelynin there are no yew trees; that windy height is too bleak for even the sturdy yew. Only white harebells and hardy grass blow about on its bare rock-strewn summit. But in most of the enclosures the yew still stands as the one enduring monument of a past whose very rocks have been covered by the silt of over a thousand years. Many of these trees date from

Hilltop Churches

a British period and remain emblematic to-day as they were then. Sometimes it is a single yew by the lychgate which one sees, or an alley of the deathless green, or perhaps yew branches completely veil a gable end of the little church. At Beddgelert, the oldest foundation in all Wales, the yew stands to-day as it stood some two thousand years ago; about its base have rushed the floods of wild mountain torrents, from its feet the graves of centuries have been washed away down to the all-embracing sea. Like children of yesterday are the mediæval lychgates through which one passes into the church enclosure and through which is often caught the first glimpse of the church bell-cot. At Caerhûn (the ancient Canovium), where the yew spreads over the gate is a double bell-cot, which, as it has the traditional straight ridge and gable in the middle, is amongst the oldest in Wales, of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, for the cots as well as the lychgates are "recent" in the life of these churches. The little crucifixes with their straight arms are also of this date. Before this time the local churches had nothing but hand-bells, which were held in great reverence. One of them may be seen in the stone coffin of Llewelyn the Great

Gallant Little Wales

at Llanrwst. It is about ten inches high and cast on an oblong plan. Gildas gave such a bell to St. David. Six hundred years later, in the twelfth century, Giraldus Cambrensis tells the story of a portable bell called "Bangu" which, when a certain woman carried it to a castle where her husband was wrongfully imprisoned, caused the destruction of the whole town except the church walls. The campanology of North Wales is a romance in itself, a collection of odd, interesting, pathetic tales of past miracles, past friendships, past enmities.

The original buildings not only did not have lychgates and bell-cots, they also did not have porches, and some to-day do not have them. But they are being added from time to time, and fearful are some of them to behold. At St. Mary's, Llanfwrog Church, just across the bridge from quaint Ruthin, where the Duchess of Westminster has lived and is of vastly more interest to the people than gable ends and oaken rafters and other such stuff, fit only for the attics of men's minds, is a bit of "restoration" suitable for display in the windows of a carriage-shop. The chancel railing is bright green, red, and black, the pews black and red,—a foretaste

Hilltop Churches

possibly of the landscape into which some of their occupants will one day take a dip,— and the stained glass vies with a refracted solar ray in yellows and oranges and reds and blues and greens. From this “restored” edifice drops a long flight of steps past the windows and signboard of an ancient hostelry, “Ye Labour in Vain Inn.” One cannot help wishing that the white gentleman upon the signboard, who is scrubbing a black man in a tub of water, would take his scrubbing-brush up to the church. Often, after all else has been hopelessly restored and all vestiges of harmonious beauty have disappeared, the old doorway remains, witness of an instinctive reverence for a threshold. Many of the circular-headed doorways, now hooded with porches, date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries and even earlier, and through them one passes over a mere sill into the sacred enclosure.

A few points, simple and easy to remember as well as easy to discover, give an added intelligent pleasure in the study of these churches. The oldest churches are generally from twelve feet six inches to fourteen feet wide; the early walls from three feet to three feet six inches

Gallant Little Wales

thick. Sixteenth-century walls rarely exceed two feet and a half in thickness. The old wattle buildings were daubed with a mixture of clay and cow dung; these church walls are built with earth and rendered on the face with lime and mortar. Buttresses are sometimes found, but they do not belong to early local work. The roofs are easy to examine and often of an enchanting beauty. At Llangelynin is a roof which is probably the original twelfth-century covering. The roof at Llanrhychwyn is also of the close couple type; here the struts are straight, but carved, and there are two ties across the nave. In some of these roofs are intermediary rafters, added when the thatch was replaced by slate.

The earliest mention of a chancel of which I know is that in the poems of Cynddelw, who lived in the twelfth century, in his ode to Ty-silio, when he speaks of a certain church as the "light or shining church" with a chancel for mass. We cannot assume that even in the twelfth century chancels were by any means common in North Wales. At Mallwyd Church there was, not so long ago, a communion table in the centre of the building, and there is no

Hilltop Churches

question but that holy ceremonies were performed originally, instead of at a chancel end, in the midst of this rectangular Holy of Holies. At Bardsey, Pennant found an insulated stone altar rather nearer the east end than the centre. The rough, uneven slate paving in these churches is comparatively modern, and it might be added comparatively luxurious. The first paving was mud and sometimes flat stones. Formerly the windows were covered by wooden shutters or lattices; that was the usage in all conventual buildings. Now the windows are either well or illy filled with coloured glass. In many of the churches falling into great dilapidation the windows have been stuffed with stone and mortar, or rudely boarded over. Some of the stained glass is genuinely ugly and some of it genuinely and anciently lovely. That at Llanrhychwyn, coloured in brown line and yellow stain and representing the Virgin and Child and the Holy Trinity, is of the fifteenth century and still beautiful. Probably the use of glass was not introduced into Wales till the thirteenth century. West windows were unknown in local Welsh work. Where a window with such an exposure is found, the opening did not belong to the early

Gallant Little Wales

church. There are windows of great antiquity in these churches. Look at the lintelled window in the passageway into St. Beuno's Chapel. Courage hesitates at assigning a date to this bit of work. There are windows far more elaborate of a comparatively early date, but they are the work of Latin monks and do not follow the straight lines of the native British architecture. An exquisite example of early Latin work is that of the Gilbertine monks upon the Beddgelert triplet.

The barrel vaults in these churches are curious concave coverings over the chancel end, ark-like in form and supposed type of the ancient church. These oaken canopies have been elaborately painted in the past; now they are to be seen in every stage of dilapidation, provoking the eye by their interrupted pictures or faint lines of red and blue. They are approximately of the same date, although not in the same condition, for their destruction is due to leaky roofs and not to age. The ground colour was the green-blue the Middle Ages loved so well, and the other colours red, yellow, and white. At Llandanwg, where the sea would flow into the western door were it not for a big embank-

Hilltop Churches

ment, there is a barrel vault with faint traces of painting upon it. An old man whose father and mother were the last people to be married there told us he took an interest in it, it was the only church in Harlech Parish fifty years ago, and "the only service held there then was when the parson and the clerk used to go over and enjoy drinking their beer on the gravestones." English came stiff to his tongue, but he described the fearful condition of the church, and the way the people took off the seats for firewood and the children made a playhouse of the abandoned structure. In one corner of the barrel vault was a picture of the Devil prodding people down into hell. The children threw things at these paintings, mud and other articles, till the pictures were completely destroyed. Whatever the subject, it is pleasant to recall the colouring of the barrel vaults, for, executed five or six hundred years ago, they must have been brightly beautiful like the margins of an illuminated book, radiant with something of the blue and gold of very heaven itself. Of the rood screens and lofts that veiled the chancel space, there are but few left intact; of the sacred rood itself, no vestige except the socket on the candlebeam into which

Gallant Little Wales

its pedestal slipped. Fanaticism has swept this feature away. In Beddgelert their rood-screen carving was converted into chairs for household use or fuel for warmth. Strangely enough, Queen Elizabeth was the last defender of the screen's mystical beauty of carven wood and the silent admonishing figure stretched upon its façade. At Llanengan there is a screen of rare delicacy, stolen, together with some elbow stalls and silver bells, from Bardsey, that resting-place of saints which seems to have been to the ecclesiastical world what Fuseli said Blake was to the art world, "good to steal from." Chests, worm-eaten and with rusty bolts, are often among the church treasures. St. Beuno's chest at Clynnog is as old as the saint himself. And at Clynnog, too, are dog tongs, or lazy tongs as they were sometimes called, in each paddle four sharpened nails which must have seemed bitter to any doggie's sides, lean or fat, as he was lifted ignominiously out of the sanctuary. And, oh, woe if it caught him by the tail or foot! There are different types of fonts in these churches: small square fonts like the earliest of Palestine, Asia Minor, Egypt; extremely small fonts of various shapes dating from the eleventh to the four-

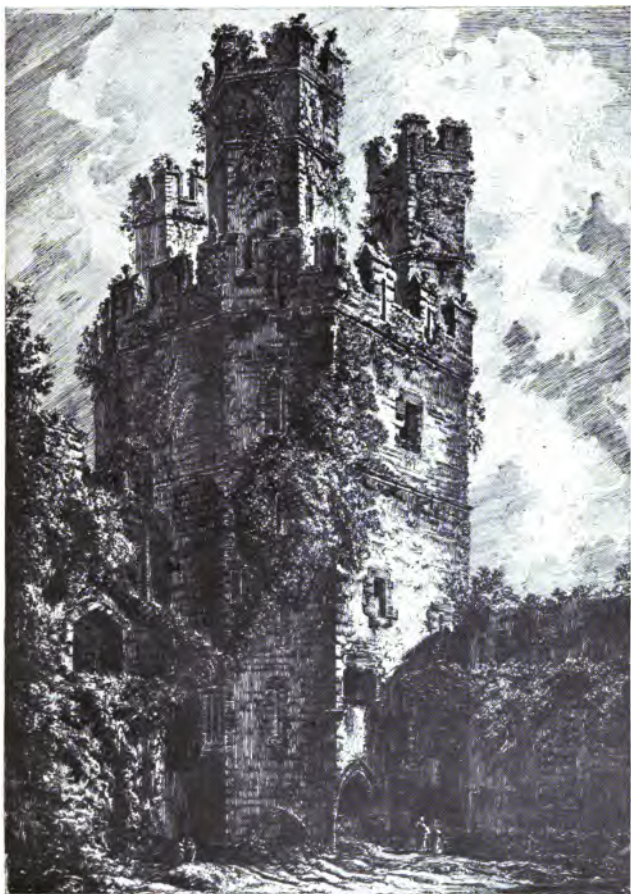
Hilltop Churches

teenth century; large fonts used for immersion, and belonging to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At Llanderfel near Corwen is a wooden image, never, I imagine, satisfactorily accounted for. It is a horse, though curiously like a deer in appearance. This figure was the standard for the image that rested upon it and which went, several hundred years ago, to help in the burning of poor Friar Forest at Smithfield, to whom, while the fire crackled about his feet, Latimer preached a sermon. Now even the brass tablet on the standard has been sent to the British Museum, and the standard itself, till within the last few years, used for a pig-trough.

Apparently London thought a Welshman who denied the supremacy of the king worth burning, difficult to be rid of. Well might Englishmen consider such a man's forebears in saintship. The Latins tried to rid the Western world of these anomalies in spiritual heritage — in vain! The Reformation burnt them. In vain, too, for the Welshman to-day, nonconformist and conformist alike, is as tenacious of the lists of his hagiology as ever he was a thousand years ago. To the ancient Celt there were three free dignitaries: church, land, and poet. To-day

Gallant Little Wales

these remain the revered dignitaries to the Welshman. In the past these offices had been closely united, for to a Welshman saintship came by birth, celebrity depended afterwards upon how he acted. There is an odd title to a Welsh catalogue of saints: "Bonedd Saint ynys Prydain," — the Gentility of the Saints of the Isle of Britain. An old Irish song says of St. Patrick that he "was a gentleman and came of decent people," a fact which to us does not seem prerequisite for sainthood. Not so to the Celt; and it is best to keep this essential difference in mind, or one might be puzzled by running across the annals, some day, of a saint in so cheery a state that he fell into his own holy well and escaped drowning only because of the good luck universally known to attend people in a similar condition. The object of the Celtic saint, till he became Latinized, was to serve his tribe by increasing its riches and enlarging its boundaries. It was not necessary for him, as it was for his brother Latin, to receive any papal sanction for his sainthood or to work any miracles. His *carte* to sanctity was membership in a certain family or monastery. The Latin Christian world, establishing its supremacy by



THE EAGLE TOWER OF CARNARVON CASTLE

From an engraving by Cuiitt

Hilltop Churches

degrees, could not fail to scoff at the temporal emphasis of Welsh saintdom. Even Giraldus, a Welshman, comments mildly upon the vindictiveness of certain saints, of whom he often knew more than he cared to tell. Gradually, by ridicule chiefly, the lists of Celtic holy men were closed. Even Bardsey, the *Insula Sanctorum* of the Welsh, does not escape a laugh from many critics, one of whom observes that "It would be more facile to find graves in Bardsey for so many saints than saints for so many graves"; a remark grudging and ungracious, for the world has condescended to steal everything from Bardsey and might leave it at least the glory of claiming as many dead saints as it pleases.

The tales, fabulous and odd, told of Welsh saints, Welsh relics, and holy wells, are particularly charming because they are not marred by over-didacticism. Tydecho was an illustrious saint who lived in the time of King Arthur. Retiring from the world, he led a life of mingled austerity in penance and of useful hours of ploughing. One day a youth seized his oxen, but the next day wild stags were drawing the plough, and a wolf harrowing after them. Fur-

Gallant Little Wales

ious, the youth brought his dogs to chase away Tydecho's wild friends. While enjoying this diversion he seated himself upon a stone; attempting to rise he found himself fixed to the rock. Truly a humiliating position for a proud-spirited youth who enjoys taunting an old man! Friendship between man and beast is woven into these tales like the bright colours threading the letters of an ancient bestiary. St. Monacella protected hares from Brochwel Yscythrog, who was hunting them. She hid the trembling little beasts under her robe and, praying devoutly, faced the dogs. The dogs ceased their running, and even when the horn was blown as a command to them to follow the hare, they stole away howling and the horn stuck to the huntsman's lips. After Brochwel had listened to Monacella's plea, the little creatures were released, and to this day no one in the parish will hunt one of Monacella's lambs.

Many and attractively full of poetry are the superstitions that still live in the solitudes of northern Wales. "Bees were created in paradise," say the "*Leges Wallicæ*," "and no light save beeswax is to be used at mass." When on the fall of man they left paradise, God Himself

Hilltop Churches

is said to have blessed them. They produced, too, the nectarious "medd" of which the ancient Britons thought so much. One day we encountered a hillside woman in great distress, breathless and flapping her apron; her bees were running away and apparently the worldly creature had no intention of letting them run back to paradise. Bent pins are still to be found at the bottom of the sacred well within the church close, pins dropped in before bathing to cure warts. Woe to the bather who failed to drop in the propitiatory pin, for he promptly caught the warts of which others had got rid. And in these holy wells the clothes of sick children were washed, with happy auguries if the little garments floated, with fell portent if they sank. At Llangelynin, where the well is still in excellent condition, an old woman told me that to cure a sick child a stranger to the family must dip the child in after sundown. Spitting upon hearing the name of the Devil may not be polite, but it is a simple way of expressing contempt, and so, too, is smiting the breast in self-condemnatory woe at the name of Judas. Some of their superstitions and customs, despite the smack of folly, are wise in

Gallant Little Wales

their emphasis upon the power of the imagination.

There are, too, some wholesome customs of precedence. The parson always used to go out of chapel first, — in some places he does so still, — and the parishioner who disputed this order of rank might have his ears boxed for his trouble. After the baptism of a little child old women wash their failing eyes in the font with pathetic faith in the virtue of new, God-given life. There used to be some sweet customs, not entirely lost yet, connected with burial. As the coffin rested on the bier outside the door, the next of kin among the women gave to the poorest persons in the parish, over the body of the dead, a great dish filled with white bread. Then a cup of drink was handed across the bier to the same poor and all knelt to repeat the Lord's Prayer. At every crossroad between the house and church they knelt again to pray, the sexton's hand-bell quiet only when all knees were on the earth.

On the way from church to church many tablets arrest the eye, kneeling fathers and mothers with processions of kneeling children in a line behind them. The *viva voce* history of

Hilltop Churches

these reliefs suggests the less quaint and more beautiful and enduring *relievo* of sepulchral urns. At Clynnog I counted thirteen children in happy procession after one father. At Conway I might have counted twenty-nine if I had wished to, but I had no such wish. At Corwen we found knee-holes in both footstones and headstones to make comfortable the knees of friends while they prayed, — or meditated, as I confess I did, upon the hideousness of most sepulchral carving and inscription. There was one part of these records which, with even the best traditions behind me, could not be undertaken — the epitaph or similar memento. Early in the journey this inscription was encountered:

Heare lyeth the body of
John, ap Robert, ap Porth, ap
David, ap Griffith, ap David
Vauchan, ap Blethyn, ap
Griffith, ap Meredith,
ap Jerworth, ap Llewelyn,
ap Jerorh, ap Heilin, ap
Cowryd, ap Cadvan, ap
Alawgwa, ap Cadell, the
King of Powys, who
departed this life the

Gallant Little Wales

XX day of March, in the
Year of our Lord God
1642, and of
his age XCV.

Now it was plain that this was one of the results of the saints' unsaintly emphasis upon a family-tree. Certainly a man has a right to as many ancestors as he can compass. But thereafter, when I saw the usual clusters of "aps" and "Griffyevanjoneses," I experienced a reluctant and fluttering sensation within accompanied by external haste to get elsewhere. Just one other epitaph, by reason of its brevity, caught my pencil:—

Here lies John Shore,
I say no more ;
Who was alive
In sixty-five.

IV

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

“What should we speak of
When we are as old as you ? When we shall hear
The rain and wind beat dark December, how
In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse
The freezing hours away ? We have seen nothing.”

EVEN the motion of driving in a post-chaise captivated the fancy of Dr. Johnson, for he said, “If I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman ; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation.” Mrs. Piozzi, who, except for that of prettiness, fulfilled these requirements both as a brilliant conversationalist and owner of a post-chaise, asked her beloved Doctor why he doted on a coach. Johnson’s reply was, that in the first place the company was shut in with him “and could not escape as out of a room,” and that in the second place, he could hear all the conversation in a

Gallant Little Wales

carriage. Any lamentations while travelling thus he considered proof of an empty head or tongue that wished to talk and had nothing about which to talk. "A mill that goes without grist," he exclaimed, "is as good a companion as such creatures." As for himself, he felt no inconvenience upon the road and he expected others to feel none. He allowed nobody to complain of rain, sun, or dust. And so greatly did he love this act of going forward that Mrs. Thrale (Mrs. Piozzi) said she could not tell how far he might be taken before he would think of refreshments.

Yet the impression which Macaulay gave of Johnson's attitude towards travelling is the one generally held: "Of foreign travel and of history he spoke with the fierce and boisterous contempt of ignorance. 'What does a man learn by travelling? Is Beauclerk the better for travelling? What did Lord Claremount learn in his travels, except that there was a snake in one of the pyramids of Egypt?'" History has proved that Macaulay could be brilliantly inaccurate; certainly in this estimate of Johnson he was so. In still another passage Macaulay says that Dr. Johnson "took it for granted that everybody

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

who lived in the country was either stupid or miserable." The first twenty-seven years of his life Johnson spent in small country towns and, although he was sometimes miserable, because he was wretchedly poor, he was never stupid.

It was the young traveller whom he censured, not the mature traveller or travelling in general. It was characteristic of him to say, "I never like young travellers; they go too raw to make any great remarks." Indeed, so grave was his sense of the value of travel that he took it upon himself to rebuke Boswell, as Boswell records: "Dr. Johnson expressed a particular enthusiasm with respect to visiting the Wall of China. I caught it for the moment, and said I really believed I should go and see the Wall of China had I not children, of whom it was my duty to take care. 'Sir,' (said he), 'by doing so you would do what would be of importance in raising your children to eminence. There would be a lustre reflected upon them from your spirit and curiosity. They would be at all times as the children of a man who had gone to view the Wall of China. I am serious, sir.'"

In his college days Johnson may not have had the same reasons as the young poet Keats

Gallant Little Wales

for going "wonderways," but reasons he had. With the Doctor, perhaps even more truly than with Keats, curiosity was "the first passion and the last." While an undergraduate he was heard to say, "I have a mind to see what is done in other places of learning. I'll go and visit the universities abroad. I'll go to France and Italy. I'll go to Padua." Twice he urged Boswell "to perambulate Spain," and of their tour to the Hebrides everybody knows. There was talk of his going to Iceland, and for a time the great Doctor discussed travelling around the world with two friends.

Of the existence of the journal of Johnson's tour in North Wales even Boswell did not know. This journey was begun by the Thrales and the Doctor leaving Streatham at eleven o'clock on Tuesday morning of July 15, 1774. On their way they stopped at Litchfield at the house of Dr. Darwin, psychologist, poet, and grandfather of Charles Darwin, of whose roses Mrs. Piozzi wrote, "I have no roses equal to those at Litchfield, where on one tree I recollect counting eighty-four within my own reach; it grew against the house of Dr. Darwin."

After passing through several towns on their

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

route to North Wales they came, a party of four, Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, little Queenie and Johnson, to Chester on July twenty-seventh. Of Chester the Doctor made short work. He was more interested in a grammar school held in part of the Abbey refectory than in aught else, and wrote particularly, "The Master seemed glad to see me." Of course the Master was glad, for was not Johnson the greatest man of his day? There is not one word for the quiet beauty of the Dee, no mention of Cheshire cheese, and nothing about Chester ale, which perhaps Johnson found as bad as did Sion Tudor. Of their sojourn in Chester we get a more lively picture from Mrs. Thrale's comment on the entry in the Doctor's journal than from the journal itself. Johnson wrote, "We walked round the walls, which are compleat." Mrs. Piozzi observed, "Of those *ill-fated* walls Dr. Johnson might have learned the extent from any one. He has since put me fairly out of countenance by saying, 'I have known *my mistress* fifteen years, and never saw her fairly out of humour but on Chester wall'; it was because he would keep Miss Thrale beyond her hour of going to bed to walk on the wall, where from the want of

Gallant Little Wales

light, I apprehended some accident to her,—perhaps to him.” Probably nine-year-old “Miss Thrale” did not mind being kept beyond her hour of going to bed by a stout gentleman who was her devoted slave!

The next day they entered Wales, dined at Mold and came to Llewenni. Mrs. Thrale’s cousin, Robert Cotton, was living at Llewenni Hall, which in 1817, after having been one thousand years in possession of the family, was torn down. At Whitchurch, a few miles away, is an alabaster altar monument to one of the Salusbury’s who owned this hall, Sir John, or Syr John y Bodiau (“Sir John of the Thumbs”). This ancestor of Mrs. Piozzi was not only distinguished by two thumbs on either hand, but also by a giant’s strength. With his bare fist he is supposed to have slain a white lioness in the Tower of London. Since then white lionesses have all disappeared. Sir John of the Thumbs also killed a mythical beast in a lair below a near-by castle, and overthrew a famous giant. Is it any wonder that Mrs. Thrale, with such a forefather, should sometimes have painted things *plus beau que le vérité*, and that, even as her ancestor was fond of pulling up trees by the roots when he

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

had nothing better to do, his descendant should once in a while give truth a little tug?

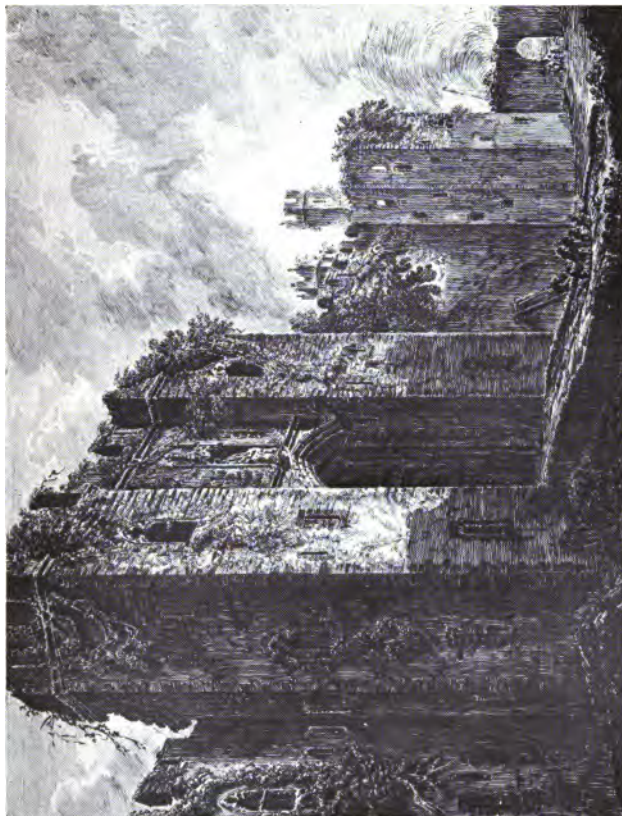
But if Mrs. Thrale had a distinguished progenitor, she had an even more distinguished ancestress, for there at Llewenni Hall lived "Mam Cymru," the Mother of Wales. This Catherine de Berain's first husband was a Salusbury, her second husband was Sir Richard Clough. The second daughter of the second marriage married Salusbury of Bachycraig, and from this marriage Mrs. Piozzi was descended. Later, Catherine de Berain became the third wife of Maurice Wynne, who was her third husband. It is said that on the way home from the funeral of her first husband, Wynne asked her to marry him. She had to refuse, however, as Sir Richard Clough had asked her on the way to the church. But she assured him that she was not superstitious about the number 3, and agreed to give Wynne the next opportunity. She kept her word.

When the Welsh used to speak of a rich person, they did not say "rich as Croesus" but "rich as a Clough." On July thirtieth, Johnson and the Thrales visited a remarkable house built by Sir Richard, the second husband of "Mam Cymru." On the thirty-first day they

Gallant Little Wales

drove to the Cathedral of St. Asaph, once the even smaller church of Llanelwy, to which Giraldus Cambrensis in his tour in 1188 referred as "paupercula." About that time this tiny cathedral was changed from wickerwork or wood to stone. On the same day they saw the Chapel of Llewenni, founded by one of the Salusburys, where Johnson was surprised because the service, read thrice on Sundays, was read only once in English.

He was dissatisfied not only with the order of Welsh services, but also with the behaviour of Welsh rivers. On this day he writes: "The rivers here are mere torrents which are suddenly swelled by the rain to great breadth and great violence, but have very little constant stream; such are the Clwyd and the Elwy." About Welsh rivers Johnson makes a great many remarks. He is as scornful of them as an American is of the Thames. Mrs. Piozzi says that his "ideas of anything not positively large were ever mingled with contempt." He asked of one of the sharp currents in North Wales, "Has this *brook* e'er a name?" "Why, dear Sir, this is the *River* Ustrad." "Let us," said Dr. Johnson, turning to his friend, "jump over it di-



GATEWAY OF CARNARVON CASTLE
From an engraving by Cuiitt

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

rectly, and show them how an Englishman should treat a Welsh river." Johnson was always of opinion that when one had seen the ocean, cascades were but little things. He used to laugh at Shenstone most unmercifully for not caring whether there was anything good to eat in the streams he was so fond of. "As if," says Johnson, "one could fill one's belly with hearing soft murmurs, or looking at rough cascades!"

It would be difficult to make a summary of all the objects Johnson called "mean" in North Wales. Among them were towns, rivers, inns, dinners, churches, houses, choirs. It is safe to say that the great Doctor could not rid himself altogether of English prejudices against the Welsh and all things Welsh. George Borrow's experience on the summit of Snowdon was not at all unusual, except that in this instance an Englishman in the presence of English people became the champion of the Welsh. Undoubtedly Johnson was influenced in his contempt not only by his English feeling, but also by the fact that he was a true son of the eighteenth century, with all that century's emphasis on power, on size, on utility.

Gallant Little Wales

Yet Johnson was not totally incapable of appreciating the romantic scenery of Wales. Some part of it, the more cultivated, he seems to have felt, for on the very next day there is this record: "The way lay through pleasant lanes, and overlooked a region beautifully diversified with trees and grass." It mortified Mrs. Thrale because Mr. Thrale, a lover of landscapes, could not enjoy them with the great Doctor, who would say, "Never heed such nonsense, a blade of grass is always a blade of grass, whether in one country or another. Let us, if we *do* talk, talk about something; men and women are my subject of enquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind." However, Johnson was certainly not insensible to the beauty of nature. In describing his emotions at the sight of Iona, he wrote: "Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings." In his tour in the Hebrides he welcomed even the inconveniences of travelling, such as wind and rain, when they meant finer scenery and more pictures for the mind.

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

Much on this same August second was found "mean," including Mrs. Thrale's gift to the romantic old clerk of the parish church of Bachycraig where Mrs. Thrale's father was buried. The day following, on their arrival in Holywell, Johnson had to admit that the town was "neither very small nor very mean." He was amazed and impressed by the yield of water from St. Winifred's Well, and the number of mill wheels the water turned. But when they went down by the stream to see a prospect, Johnson adds very specifically that he "had no part" in it. He was vastly more interested in some brass and copper works, in *lapis calaminaris*, in pigs of copper, and in some ironworks where he saw iron half an inch thick "square-cut with shears worked by water," and hammers that moved as quick "as by the hand." One has a curious feeling that, were the Doctor suddenly translated to this world again, foundries would interest him vastly more than any natural panorama. In this Johnson was truly a man of his times, which were epoch-making because of their new interest in the mechanics of industry, their gigantic industrial impulse. Without a word for the singular beauties of Holywell, without refer-

Gallant Little Wales

ence to the legend of St. Winifred or mention of the ruins of the Abbey, he concludes his journal for August third: "I then saw wire drawn, and gave a shilling. I have enlarged my notion, though not being able to see the movements, and not having time to peep closely, I know less than I might."

Another feature of the land impressed him favourably, the houses of country gentlemen. "This country seems full of very splendid houses," he notes on August fourth, after visiting a Mr. Lloyd's house near Ruthin, where he had been to see the castle. He writes quite at length on the ruins of Ruthin and ends characteristically, "Only one tower had a chimney, so that there was [little] commodity of living. It was only a place of strength." It was on this day that the keep of the castle, when he heard that Mrs. Thrale was a native of North Wales, told her that his wife had been a Welshwoman, and had desired to be buried at Ruthin. "So," said the man, "I went with the corpse myself, because I thought it would be a pleasant journey, and indeed I found Ruthin a very beautiful place."

Two days later they dined at Mr. Myddleton's, of Gwaenynog, the gentleman who raised

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

the unwelcome monument to Johnson's memory before the Doctor had had a chance to die, and while he still considered himself very much alive. This memorial is on the site at Gwaenynog where Johnson used to stroll up and down. It reads: "This spot was often dignified by the presence of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., whose moral writings, exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, gave ardour to Virtue and confidence to Truth." Perhaps it is not strange that Johnson was not pleased with the monument. He wrote to Mrs. Thrale, "Mr. Myddleton's attention looks like an intention to bury me alive. I would as willingly see my friend, however benevolent and hospitable, quietly inurned. Let him think, for the present, of some more acceptable memorial."

To the Doctor death was always an enemy who would, he knew, outwit him in the end, a terrifying presence against which he struggled. "But who can run the race with death?" he cries despairingly. This premature memorial must have revolted everything in him, for to him "the whole of life" was but keeping away the thoughts of death. Even a dark road troubled him.

Gallant Little Wales

Leaving Llewenni on August eighteenth, they started definitely forward on their journey. They passed through Abergele, "a mean little town," to Bangor, where they found "a very mean inn." Certainly meanness is accumulating in Wales! Johnson had the instinctive contempt for things Welsh which so many English people hold. But, after finding Lord Bulkely's house at Bangor also "very mean," this is the point in the great Doctor's journal where the lover of Wales may take heart.

There was one contrivance of the hand and mind of man which impressed Dr. Johnson tremendously. Where such works of the Creator as Snowdon, for example, failed, where the mystery of this land of legend passed him by, castles succeeded by virtue of their size, the strength of their walls, the completeness of their equipment. In Denbigh, Johnson had eagerly tried to trace the lines of that "prodigious pile" of a castle. So much of the comment we get in this neglected Welsh journal and in Johnson's other writings seems to summarize itself in two words: size and power. He told Mrs. Piozzi to get a book on gardening, since she would stay in the country, feed the chickens, and starve

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

her intellect, "and learn," he said, "to raise the *largest* turnips, and to breed the *biggest* fowls." It was in vain that Mrs. Piozzi told him that the goodness of these dishes did not depend upon their size.

From Beaumaris Castle to Carnarvon there is a crescendo of praise, ending in the memorable words about Carnarvon: "To survey this place would take much time. I did not think there had been such buildings; it surpassed my ideas." Of Beaumaris, Johnson wrote: "The Castle is a mighty pile. . . . This Castle corresponds with all the representatives of romancing narratives. Here is not wanting the private passage, the dark cavity, the deep dungeon, or the lofty tower. We did not discover the well. This is the most compleat view that I have yet had of an old Castle." And then came four last delighted words, "It had a moat."

Nor was the next day, August twentieth, less of a success. After meeting with some friends they went to see the castle in Carnarvon, which Johnson describes as "an edifice of stupendous magnitude and strength; it has in it all that we observed at Beaumaris, and much greater dimensions, many of the smaller rooms floored

Gallant Little Wales

with stone are entire; of the larger rooms, the beams and planks are all left; this is the state of all buildings left to time. We mounted the Eagle Tower by one hundred and sixty-nine steps, each of ten inches. We did not find the well; nor did I trace the moat; but moats there were, I believe, to all castles on the plain, which not only hindered access, but prevented mines. We saw but a very small part of the mighty ruin, and in all these old buildings, the subterraneous works are concealed by the rubbish."

When Johnson and the Thrales were on their way from Llewenni to Bangor, they passed through Conway. The Doctor was much exercised in Conway because of the plight of an Irish gentlewoman and her young family who could get no beds to sleep in, but the one feature in this rare old town which might have impressed him, its castle, he did not notice in the journal. Built by the same architect who planned Carnarvon, it has much of its grace and is in some respects even more beautifully placed. With its machicolated towers, its vast banqueting-hall, Queen Eleanor's oratory, and the river washing at its foundations, it is still a wonderful old pile. On the return trip Johnson makes

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

a short, practical note to the effect that the castle afforded them nothing new, and that if it was larger than that of Beaumaris, it was smaller than that of Carnarvon. Carnarvon was the largest, and the Doctor was not to be weaned from it any more than from the idea that Mrs. Thrale ought to raise the largest turnips.

The day following this memorable inspection of Carnarvon Castle, they dined with Sir Thomas Wynne and his Lady. Johnson's comment was brief, — "the dinner mean, Sir Thomas civil, his Lady nothing." It would seem that Lady Wynne failed to recognize the greatness of her visitor, and, accustomed to a distinguished reception, the great man's vanity was hurt. Afterwards he made remarks about Sir Thomas's Lady, in which she was compared to "sour small beer" and "run tea." Of a lady in Scotland he had, said "that she resembled a dead nettle; were she alive she would sting."

This mean dinner and, we presume, its meaner hostess were but a sorry prelude to a melancholy journey which the party had to take to Mrs. Thrale's old home at Bodvel. They found nothing there as in Mrs. Thrale's childhood; the walk was cut down, the pond

Gallant Little Wales

was dry. The near-by churches which Mrs. Thrale held by impropriation Johnson thought "mean and neglected to a degree scarcely imaginable. They have no pavement, and the earth is full of holes. The seats are rude benches; the altars have no rails. One of them has a breach in the roof. On the desk, I think, of each lay a folio Welsh Bible of the black letter, which the curate cannot easily read." Over one hundred and thirty years later it was that I made the tour, which I have described for you, of these Welsh churches of early foundation. Mysterious, desolate, dilapidated old places they are; in comparison with the ugly, comfortable nonconformist chapels, spectacles for the prosperous to jeer at.

Mrs. Piozzi tells a story which shows that the great Doctor brought terror to the hearts of the Welsh parsons. "It was impossible not to laugh at the patience Dr. Johnson showed, when a Welsh parson of mean abilities, though a good heart, struck with reverence at the sight of Dr. Johnson, whom he had heard of as the greatest man living, could not find any words to answer his enquiries concerning a motto around somebody's arms which adorned a tombstone

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

in Ruabon Churchyard. If I remember right, the words were, —

Heb Dw, Heb Dym (Without God, without all)

Dw o' diggon (God is all sufficient).¹

And though of not very difficult construction, the gentleman seemed wholly confounded, and unable to explain them; till Dr. Johnson, having picked out the meaning by little and little, said to the man, '*Heb* is a preposition, I believe, Sir, is it not?' My countryman, recovering some spirits upon the sudden question, cried out, 'So I humbly presume, Sir,' very comically."

About Bodvel they found the Methodist "prevalent," which could not have been a pleasant circumstance to Johnson. With nonconformity the great Doctor had no sympathy. Boswell says that Johnson thought them "too sanguine in their accounts of their success among savages, and that much of what they tell is not to be believed. He owned that the Methodists had done good; had spread religious impressions among the vulgar part of mankind; but, he said, they had great bitterness against other

¹ Heb Duw, Heb Dym (Without God, Nothing), Duw a' diggon (God and plenty) would be more correct Welsh and a better translation.

Gallant Little Wales

Christians, and that he never could get a Methodist to explain in what he excelled others."

This unhappy day they concluded suitably by going to Pwllheli, "a mean old town at the extremity of the country," where they bought something by which to remember its meanness. Pwllheli is still mean, but in a different way, for it has become a noisy watering-resort from which the quiet traveller longs to escape at the first moment to quiet Abersoch or to Llanengan or Aberdaron, where "trippers" cease from troubling and tourists are at rest.

Nowadays, even the most breathless will grant Snowdon a few words of praise — praise for its lakes, awe for its rock-strewn valleys like the valley of the shadow of death. Of the two lakes, Llyn Beris and Llyn Padarn, which receive the waters on the northern slope of Snowdon, Johnson did not think much, for he complained that "the boat is always near one bank or the other." As for Snowdon itself, the record is, "We climbed with great labour. I was breathless and harassed." There is no word for all that is romantic or awe-inspiring, not an exclamation for the summit to which have mounted king, poet, priest, bard, wise men, through countless ages —

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

only a record of Queenie's goats, "one hundred and forty-nine, I think." Mr. Thrale, Queenie's father, was near-sighted and could not see the goats, so he had promised the child a penny for every one she showed him. Dr. Johnson, the devoted friend of Queenie, kept the account.

On their way back to the English border again, they passed through Bangor, where Johnson must have been happy in finding that "the quire is mean!" On August twenty-eighth they were once more with hospitable Mr. Myddleton. Here they stayed for over a week, and the journal contains, among other things, a long note about a Mr. Griffiths. The addition of the name of his estate or village fails to identify him now; looking for a Griffiths or a Jones in Wales, even a particular Jones or Griffiths, is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Perhaps the present limitation to a dozen patronymics is a blessing for courts of law, but it is baffling for the curious-minded man. The historian finds the old Welsh John ap Robert ap David ap Griffith ap Meredith ap David ap Vauchan ap Blethyn ap Griffith ap Meredith, and so on for a dozen more "aps," easier for purposes of identification.

Gallant Little Wales

On their homeward way Johnson was enthusiastic about Wrexham and its "large and magnificent" church, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales. On the seventh of September they came to Chirk Castle, but I cannot find that they went into this residence, a place which undoubtedly would have delighted Johnson more on account of its "commodity of living" and solid grandeur than because one of its heiresses was the unamiable Warwick Dowager who had married Addison. They left for Shrewsbury after they had viewed the little waterfall of Pistyll Rhaiadr, where the Doctor remarked only upon its height and the copiousness of its fall. If Johnson had been an up-to-date Cambrian railway tourist, he could not have entered and left North Wales in more approved style, for he came in by way of Chester and left by way of Shrewsbury. Safely out of Wales they journeyed homeward through Worcester, probably Birmingham, and Oxford. On September twenty-fourth there is this simple record: "We went home."

It is to be remembered that on this tour Johnson lacked the companionship of the faithful Boswell. Yet the scantiness of the diary and



A VIEW OF DENBIGH CASTLE

From an engraving by Boydell, 1750

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

its critical attitude cannot be accounted for wholly on this ground, but were due, I think, far more to the fact that the Doctor was thoroughly English in prejudice. Tobias Smollett's feeling in "Humphrey Clinker," for example, is even more English and uncomplimentary. All through his tour of the Hebrides, though he denounced Scotland and all things Scottish, called the Scotch liars and their country naked, yet the Doctor had an uneasy conviction of their superiority. As far as Wales was concerned, he simply did not consider this country of Arthur, of bard and of poet, this country of an indestructible nationalism, worthy his serious interest. Had he lived in Shakespeare's day his concern would have been much greater, his respect more solicitous.

On the first visit to Mr. Myddleton the preservation of the Welsh language had been discussed. In his journal for that date Dr. Johnson wrote, "Myddleton is the only man, who, in Wales, has talked to me of literature." He was visiting people who, almost universally, were supremely indifferent to Wales and all things Welsh. In other words, he was visiting the upper or ruling classes. It is not so many years

Gallant Little Wales

ago that the children of the gentry were still not allowed to learn Welsh for fear their English accent might be spoiled. Now, happily, they are taught Welsh, a fact which not only improves the relationship between them and the working classes, but also is contributing generously to a revival of all that is best in Welsh song and literature. Even a prince of the blood royal learns Welsh and speaks it.

Dr. Johnson was in Wales at a time when the intellectual interests of Welshmen were most flagging, that is, just before the introduction of the Welsh Sunday Schools which, with their educational rather than exclusively religious function, gave impulse to a period of modern Welsh literature. Not only in chronology but also in importance, the establishment of the Welsh Sunday School must take precedence of Lady Charlotte Guest's translations of the "Mabinogion." Yet what Macpherson's "Ossian" did for Scotland in the seventies in arousing interest, Lady Guest did for Wales in 1838. It is possible, if one can presuppose the impossible, that with these translations in hand Dr. Johnson's journal would have been very different. However, one is fearful that, forti-

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

fied even with Lady Charlotte's beautiful translations, there would have been passages in the authentic Welsh "Mabinogion" as angrily rejected by him as Macpherson's imposture was. Johnson said that he never could get the meaning of an Erse song explained to him. He asked a young lady who had sung such a song what it was about, and she replied that it was for the entertainment of the company. He explained that it was its meaning he could not understand, whereupon she answered that it was a love song. And that was all the intelligence, Johnson said, that he could get.

There was strong probability, as a Welsh traveller in 1682 expressed it, of Welsh being "English'd out of Wales, as Latin was barbarously Goth'd out of Italy." From the time of the Great Rebellion, however, the condition of the Welsh language began to improve, and it is possible greatly to overrate the difficulties with which Johnson met in coming to know the life of the people. Impatiently he had exclaimed, "Let us, if we do talk, talk about something; men and women are my subject of enquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind." But from any evidence in his journal

Gallant Little Wales

Johnson did not consider it worth his while to discover how much the Welsh really do differ from the English. The visible physical fact with which he was confronted was the dark-haired, dark-eyed, dark-complexioned Welshman of medium stature, very Spanish-looking, sometimes almost Oriental. What he heard were voices quite distinct from the English, quiet and pure in enunciation. What he must have felt — if he felt the Welsh as distinct, except in inferiority — was a race as different as the south is from the north, sensitive, imaginative, excitable, deeply impressionable to everything that is beautiful, as capable of the “howl” as the Irish, yet more critical, of an intellectual independence which makes Roman Catholicism unwelcome to the Welsh, with a shrewdness that is the logic of success in money-getting, a captive race with minds which can never be servile. Yet in a letter to Boswell announcing that he had visited five out of the six counties of North Wales, Dr. Johnson wrote: “Wales is so little different from England, that it offers nothing to the speculation of the traveller.” Johnson was capable, too, of taunting Boswell with the sterility of Scotland. He had a certain strain of contrari-

Dr. Johnson's Tour of North Wales

ness in him, "tonic" some call it, which made him emphasize the undesirable features of a country or a personality. Three years after this journey, forgetting even his interest in castles, he was able to say: "Except the woods of *Bachycraigh*, what is there in Wales that can fill the hunger of ignorance, or quench the thirst of curiosity?"

V

Welsh Folk-Lore

MANY and attractively full of poetry are the superstitions still living in the solitary Welsh hills. One day I encountered a hillside woman while we were looking for a hilltop church. She was in great distress, breathless and flapping her apron. Now there is a Welsh legend that bees were created in paradise, and her bees were running away. Apparently, this worldly, heartless creature had no intention, if an apron could prevent it, of allowing her bees to go back to heaven. Fairyland is Cambria in Wales, if you will let me juggle with my words in this fashion, for I do not know how to express it otherwise. And yearning for continued love and life, even with the bees, is the breath of the phantom and spirit world called "Fairyland." Although the instinct of faith in the supernatural may be primitive and the Welsh of to-day highly civilized, yet supernatural belief is still ineradicated among the people. Their childish tales, often so hard to understand, are full of a haunting race life. Con-

Welsh Folk-Lore

viction, for example, that fairies are the souls of dead mortals, mortals not good enough for heaven or bad enough for hell, — at least the thought is a gentle one, and as such not to be despised. And to their gentle masters the fairies themselves seem to have given an uncommon devotion. If fairies are troublesome, one can sometimes get rid of them by changing one's residence. But not so with these Welsh fairies! Like the family servant for whom every one longs, they stick closer than a brother. Even going into England will not drive Welsh fairies away from those they love. Matthew Arnold should have considered this when he was studying the Celtic temperament, and denouncing it for its inconstancy, for the essence of all that is Celtic is the Welsh fairy.

One is a little of the opinion of the youth, who, when he first saw the Lady of the Lake, thought she was a goose. That is what I thought of my first fairies, and still think of them. Yet, in this day and generation, it is something to have seen a fairy at all! It was dusk, and I had come through a tiny hill village, where white cottages were gleaming in the dark, and light shining on garden walls. It was so quiet that I

Gallant Little Wales

could hear pine needles dropping on the ground, and the wind talking in the branches of the rain, still miles distant upon the sea. The noise of a tardy bumblebee, hurrying homeward in the dark, fairly boomed in my ears, and the sounds of shale rock slipping down the hillside came and went mysteriously. Through lighted windows I caught glimpses of evening comfort, of a bright fire glowing with peat, whose aroma was everywhere on the soft air, of dressers and tridarns, brave with countless ornaments, of a grandfather's clock whose wise old face shone with light, of children's heads about the supper table.

But a higher hill was calling me, and an adventure of whose nature I had not even dreamed. I turned off the road by a Wesleyan chapel and mounted a steep path. Up, up, up I went around the side of a green hill, sometimes listening to the night stir of the birds, sometimes startled by a brown rabbit, leaping for cover. Out beyond, the mountains of Snowdonia were piled height on height, all washed in sepia depth upon a sky, moonless, but brilliant with stars. I hastened, for I was eager to reach the pine-crowned summit. Up there would be no sound

Welsh Folk-Lore

except the wind in the trees, and once in a while some homely noises from the villages in the valley below : the sharp bark of a dog, the bleating of a lamb, the closing of some cottage door, a resonant "good-night."

Once on the hilltop, I lay down to rest, listening to the soft flight and hooting of some young owl, and feeling the grass cool and deep to my head and hands. As I lay there, eyes half closed, I heard some one coming up the path. Nearer and nearer drew uncertain footsteps and the tapping of a cane over loose stones. I sat up quickly, and there in the dark was an old woman, a cane in one hand, a basket in the other. Something cried piteously from the basket and I asked what it was. The old crone said that it was a kitten, and showed me a sack in which something else, tied up, squirmed and mewed. But she did not open the bag. After a due amount of greeting and curtseying, the old woman went on. I noticed that she kept looking back as she followed the path over the crown of the hill.

My attention was diverted from her by the approach of more footsteps. It was a boy, a very large boy, and in his hand I could clearly see a

Gallant Little Wales

school-bag, ridiculously small for such a big lad, in which he, too, carried something. Behind him walked a huge dog, feathered on back and legs so heavily that his shaggy hair trailed on the ground. I heard something cry from the little bag, and I asked what it was. The lad replied in Welsh that it was a kitten. I could see him smiling as he stood his ground. Except in Welsh there was nothing further for me to do. Under the most favourable circumstances it is a great deal to do anything at all in Welsh, and with my heart beating rapidly and my tongue growing dry, I did not feel that I could do anything more in any language. We were silent while the little thing kept on "miaowing," and this boy, like an ordinary boy, hitched about for a few moments, kicking stones from the path, and then went on, followed by the dog.

Erect and uneasy, I continued to sit up. Just as dog and boy were out of sight I heard some one else stumbling up the path and a faint kitten-like noise. I began to be afraid of those kittens being carried one after one over this desolate hilltop. It suggested a little the enchantments in the "Mabinogion," only in the "Mabinogion" mice and not kittens played the

Welsh Folk-Lore

leading part. I got up and fled before this experience should have a chance to become the beginning of some enchantment. But already I felt as if a spell were upon me, and even when I was quite far away from the kitteny place, I was still in a strange condition of excitement. One feels a natural dislike for any sort of hilltop enchantments, and I did.

I was making considerable speed in my Welsh-soled boots and feeling more like an ordinary person, when the path took a sharp turn and I saw something strange in front of me. Down below ran the road, hard enough to be a fact, and lighted by the clear glow of the stars. If only one could always be sure of what is coming in this world, such a turning as I had taken would be like Keats's beauty, "a joy forever." But alas! close at my own right hand, very distinct, unmistakably clear, rose something my eyes had never met before : a chimney with no house attached to it. And on the treeless meadow in front of this apparition I saw the old woman leaning on her stick and the boy sitting beside his dog. Clearly the spell had worked. But how I struggled out from under this enchantment is another story.

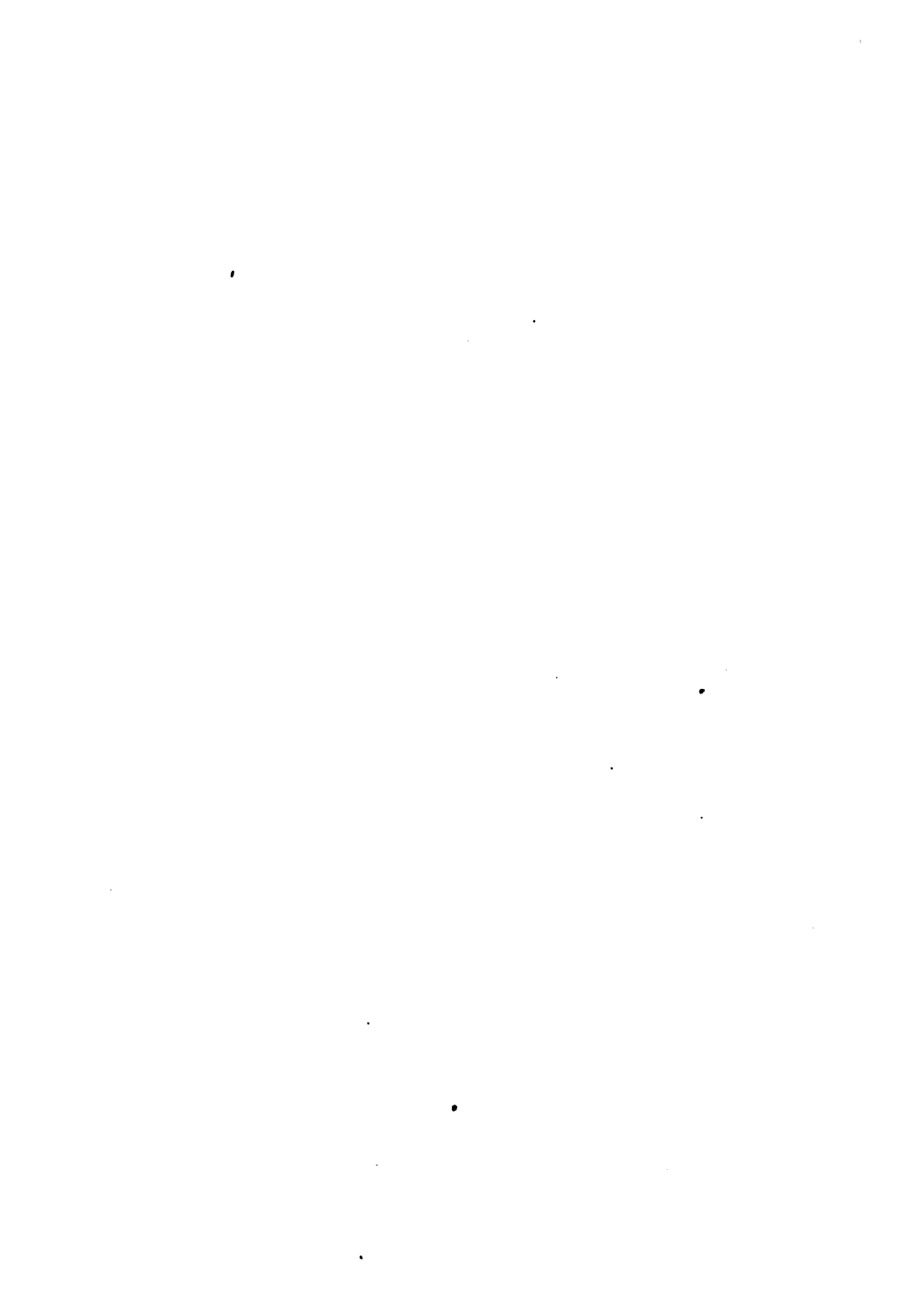
Gallant Little Wales

The least credulous may look at fairy and goblin food in the woods and fields, and their gloves, the fox-glove, growing beside the road. And their animals, their sheep, their horses, their dogs are visible on many a dim hillside. The Welsh speak of these little people as the fair folk or family — “y Tylwyth Teg.” And well do they deserve the name. Sometimes they are spoken of as the fair folk of the wood or the fair folk of the mine. In gowns of green, blue, white, and scarlet they dance on moonlit nights. If they like you they will bestow blessings on you, and are frequently called “mothers’ blessings” because mothers are glad to have such little ones. But if one speaks unkindly of them, one will get into trouble. And here, whether one be talking of fairies or of mortals, who cannot always avenge themselves as readily as fairies, is a lesson worth remembering.

Elves, according to the Welsh, — I have seen only a picture of one drawn by a Welsh miner, — also live on goblin food and wear foxgloves when they have any particularly hard work to do. The Queen of the Elves is none other than the Shakespearean fairy spoken of by Mercutio, who comes



RUTHIN CASTLE
From an engraving by Buck, 1742



Welsh Folk-Lore

“ In shape no bigger than an agate stone
On the forefinger of an alderman.”

No one who has *not* seen a fairy can have any idea how difficult it is to draw the line between history and story. The difficulties of the folklorist are as nothing,—for his is the scientific spirit,—compared with the trouble the real fairy hunter has in the open. Nowadays, of course, no one believes everything or possibly anything he is told. But in times past mankind seems to have been gifted with a more intimate faith in and knowledge of some things than we have to-day. For example, people used to know Satan better and were more afraid of him. An honest Welsh farmer saw him lying across the road with his head on one wall and his tail on the other. The Devil was moaning horribly, which in this uncomfortable position would not be strange for any one.

In criticism of Welsh fairies there is one thing to be said. They not only have a rather practical-joking sort of humour, but they also have very little sense of equity. A man may do his best for them, and then they repay him in the end by a trick. A Welsh piper was coming home in the gray of the evening, and had to

Gallant Little Wales

cross a little running stream, from which he saw only the shadowed hillside and heard only the voice of the wind. But when he had travelled beyond the hill, music became audible, and, turning, instead of the knoll he had been looking at, there was a great castle with lights blazing and music playing and the sound of dancing feet. He went back and was caught in the procession coming out from its doors and taken in to pipe to them. He piped for a day or so, but he was anxious to return to his people, and the fairies seemed to understand. They said they would let him go if he would play a favourite tune. He played his best, they danced fast and furiously. And at last he was set free on the dark hillside, with only the voice of the wind for company. He went home hastily, but when he entered his father's house no one knew him. An old man awoke from a doze by the fire, and said that he had heard, when a boy, of a piper who had gone away on a quiet evening and never come back again. That was over a hundred years ago.

Perhaps there is no reason why the fairies, as well as poor mortals, should not be allowed a natural and happy alternation between badness

Welsh Folk-Lore

and goodness. Metaphorically speaking, they are not the only creatures who steal money and butter and cheese, and who whisk away helpless, unbaptized infants. Doubtless a New England Mather — those early New England Mathers were hard on babies — would say that an infant who remained unbaptized long enough to be discovered by a fairy deserved to be stolen. Such an idea could have flourished only in New England. As if it were not bad enough to face the-survival-of-the-fittest test in this life without carrying it over into heaven! I, for one, am not disposed to find fault with the fairies when, as happened in Beddgelert, they led a man into beautiful lodgings. To know what a temptation a beautiful apartment might become, one must have lived, as I have, in that little mountain-cupped village. When the man awoke in the morning after a peaceful night's rest, he was sleeping on a swamp with a clump of rushes for his pillow. If he had been a nervous, sleepless, modern man, instead of finding fault as he did, he would have been grateful for the night's sound rest and forthwith tried the swamp again. After this there would have been a "Swamp Cure for Insomnia."

Gallant Little Wales

There are ghosts, too, in Wales, but they are rather spiritless creatures, much easier to catch and not so tricky as the fairies. Nor do they select prickly furze and stony hilltops as their hiding-places. But on the whole they are difficult to subdue, especially the farm ghosts. While the servants are busy making the butter, the ghost or spirit frequently throws something unclean into the milk or sends the pans spinning around like mad. In one farm the farmer offered a reward of five pounds to any one who would lay their particularly lively spirit. Several people tried it, including an aged priest in whose face the impertinent ghost waved a woman's bonnet. Finally, the Established Church being unable to cope with this sprightly situation, an Independent minister from Llanarmon coaxed the ghost into the barn. There the spirit, still unsubdued, turned into a lion, a mastiff, and other ferocious beasts, but in no incarnation could it do any harm to the Independent Griffiths. It became discouraged, and the minister persuaded the poor thing to appear in the form of a fly. Perhaps in this incarnation the wretched thing still had hopes of revenge. However, the intrepid Griffiths was too much for it, and it

Welsh Folk-Lore

was captured in a tobacco box and borne off, never to trouble the farmer any more.

The death portents in Cambria reveal all the strangeness and lawlessness of the Celtic imagination. No one who does not know the Welsh hills, who has not been on them day after day, can feel the significance of these death portents. One must have travelled on the top and edge of the Welsh mountain world to understand, — have looked out upon a sea of hills gray and barren in their utter colourlessness, and down upon valleys like the valley of the shadow of death. There abyss and altitude are alike full of terrors, of mist before which mind and step falter, of an Unknown which presses home in bodily anguish, which distorts the vision and strikes upon the ear with the outcry of bewildered souls. It is not strange, then, that the Welsh have the most horrible of banshees. It is known as the *Gwrach y Rhybin*, the old hag of the mist; and a *Cyhyraeth* which moans dolefully in the night but is never seen; and a *Tolaeth* which groans or sings or saws, or tramps with its feet, and is also unseen. And there are, besides, the “Dogs of Hell” and the “Dogs of the Sky” and the “Corpse Candle” and the “Goblin

Gallant Little Wales

Funeral," — all of them portents of death. Several years ago I came very near seeing one of these portentous dogs. I was on a treeless upland pasture, rich with ruby like a deep agate, with lavender, flecked with emerald-green as musk is freaked with brown; purple, pink, and opalescent in the sunshine that came and went. There were black sheep and white in that pasture, I remember, and some little lambs that straddled with surprise. One rose, stretching and curling its tail with the delicious energy of waking from sleep. I looked down what seemed like a particoloured gulf of greensward into valleys where men and cattle had become dots in size, and up to more fern and heather and altitudes where the curlew cried. It was as I looked up that I saw an impressively large black dog that went through an impossibly small sheep-hole in a sheep-wall. But a wisp of mist came over the Welsh mountainside, and one never makes an effort to see that sort of thing or to run after it. Hunting rollicking elves and lightfoot fairies is quite a different matter!

One of the most beautiful legends in the Iolo Manuscripts is the story of one of these death portents. There was a lord rich in houses and

Welsb Folk-Lore

land and gold. Every luxury of life was his for the asking. One night he heard a voice cry out distinctly three times, "The greatest and richest man of this parish shall perish to-night." He was aware that there was no other man so great or rich as he, and he sent for the physician and prepared to die. But the night passed and day came and he still lived. At sunrise he heard the bell tolling and knew that some one must have died, and he sent to enquire who it was. It was an old blind beggar who had asked for charity at the lord's gate and been refused. Then this great lord saw that the voice had come as a warning to him, that his riches were as nothing in comparison with the treasure and wealth which the blind man had in the kingdom of heaven. He accepted the warning and relieved all who were poor or in need. When he died, angels were heard to sing him a welcome, and after his death he was buried, as he had asked to be, in the blind beggar's grave.

Of hags and witches there used to be far too many in Wales. Shakespeare tells all one needs to know of them. For some reasons, hidden to us, he had peculiarly intimate and extensive information concerning Celtic folk-lore. Mac-

Gallant Little Wales

beth, speaking of witches, says, "I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished." These witches did not hesitate to throw even portions of human beings into seething cauldrons: —

"Round about the cauldron go;
In the poisoned entrails throw."

They threw in other things, too, as the third witch tells us, —

"Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Silver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips."

In Wales the knowledge which witches possessed they did not use for the good of others, but for their hurt; they tormented children and animals, they plagued the hard-working and industrious, and upset the Welsh household. In Cambria there are witches unlike any I have



THE COMPLETE ANGLER IN WALES

Welsh Folk-Lore

ever heard of, witches that will cause cows to sit down like cats before the fire. No wonder the Welsh farmer keeps his Bible handy in the kitchen chest, and runs for it post-haste, to read his seated cow a chapter and unwitch her! No wonder that with such witches conjurors are needed,—if for no other reason, then to unseat the cows; and that country folk pluck the snap-dragon to protect themselves from these hags! No wonder the peasants cross their doors, even to this day in isolated districts, to shield themselves, and that they keep horseshoes and churchyard earth to preserve their cottages from spells!

No matter how he fumbled the English fairies, Shakespeare never made any mistake with the Welsh. He understood what “mab” meant,—that it meant a little thing,—just as “mab-cath” in Welsh means a kitten, or “mabinogi,” the singular of “mabinogion,” means a tale told to the little ones. No one who has not seen a fairy can have any idea how difficult it is to draw the line between history and story. That some of the fairies seen on the way home from fairs and from patriotic Eisteddfodau—Welsh national festivals of poetry and song—are due

Gallant Little Wales

to ale, cannot be disputed. It is commonly said that the Methodists are driving the fairies out of Cambria. These nonconformists are usually teetotallers. However, the real fairy is still in Wales, and if you do not believe me, all I can say is, that you must go to Wales and prove that I am wrong. But perhaps it would be well before you take the journey to look at your foot, for if you find you have not a foot that water runs under, it is best for you not to go. So runs the ancient proverb, and without that lucky foot no fairy shall you see.

There is only one thing that can possibly counteract the lack of a requisite instep for those who desire to see fairies, and that is eating a good deal of cheese. I do not know why this is, but I do know that as far back as one can go, much further back than Giraldus Cambrensis or even Taliessin or the archest of the arch-druids, Welsh rarebit and roasted cheese have been the very bread of Cymric diet. There is a story in John Rastell's "Hundred Mery Talys," printed in the sixteenth century, which shows that before Shakespeare came to elucidate the Welsh fairy, this question of cheese and the Welsh had been duly considered: "I fynde

Welsh Folk-Lore

wrytten amonge olde gestes, howe God mayde Saynt Peter porter of heuen, and that God of hys goodnes, sone after his passyon, suffered many men to come to the kyngdome of Heuen with small deseruyng; at whych tyme there was in heuen a great companye of Welchmen, whyche with crakyng and babelyng troubled all the other. Wherefore God sayde to saynte Peter that he was wery of them, and that he wold fayne haue them out of heuen. To whome Saynte Peter sayd: Good Lorde, I warrente you, that shall be done. Wherefore Saynt Peter wente out of heuen gates and cried with a loud voice *Cause bobbe* (caws pob), that is as moche to saye as rosted chese, whiche thyng the Welchemen heryng, ranne out of heuen a great pace. And when Saynt Peter saw them all out, he suddenly wente into Heuen, and locked the dore, and so sparred all the Welchmen out."

Undoubtedly among everything Welsh, even in literature, cheese is the "Open Sesame." It is encountered in "Mabinogion" romance and beauty, which is the same thing as to say cheese among the Welsh! Is there any other folk-lore in the history of the world in which cheese plays so important a rôle? It might in German folk-

Gallant Little Wales

lore, but the fact is that it does not. Bread, milk, the juice of the grape, but cheese ? No, that is lifted into the realm of imagination and of a world-classic only in Cambria. Again Shakespeare showed his surprisingly accurate knowledge of the Celt when Falstaff exclaims, "Heaven defend me from that Welsh Fairy, lest he transform me to a piece of cheese!"

VI

The City of the Prince of Wales

FROM the heart of Snowdon, some thirteen miles or more, on roads gray with altitudes of rock, green with shining hillside pastures dotted with white sheep, and crossed by rushing streams, we walked down to Carnarvon. From the rocky heights behind it, this city of the Prince of Wales—the great castle pile, the castle walls enclosing the roofs of many buildings—extends to the edge of the sea, where the boom of a sailing-vessel swinging around might easily touch the castle wall. And beyond are the ships, the Island of Anglesey, Mona, beloved in all Welsh hearts, peaceful and fertile, with the clouds above.

It was tranquil, luxuriant, established, unshaken by anything that Time had been able to do. There still were the walls strong to defend; the ships from the sea, and cottage chimneys symbol of many an ingle nook, of quiet firesides, of homely comforts, of beloved household faces, of young joy and ancient peace.

Gallant Little Wales

“Caer Seint yn Arfon!” “Caer ar Fon,” Carnarvon, meaning the stronghold opposite Mona or Anglesey. “Caer,” the fortress, the station, where in Welsh legend, Elen, the great Welsh road-maker, was sought and won by the Emperor Maximus, — history this, or tradition, which makes the thirteenth century and its Edwards and its castles seem but as the children of yesterday. I thought of the description of the old city in the “Dream of Maxen Wledig,” the dream of Maximus, the tyrant, in the “Mabinogion,” one of the classics of the world and *the* classic of Welsh literature. In that dream what did that Roman Emperor see but what we now saw? “Valleys he saw, and steeps, and rocks of wondrous height, and rugged precipices, never yet saw he the like. And thence he beheld an island in the sea facing this rugged land. And between him and this land was a country of which the plain was as large as the sea, the mountain as vast as the wood. And from the mountain he saw a river that flowed through the land and fell into the sea. And at the mouth of the river he beheld a castle, the fairest that man ever saw, and the gate of the castle was open, and he went into the castle.”

The City of the Prince of Wales

Probably "Helen of the Roads" is the legendary form which the power of Rome has taken in Wales. On either side of the mountains two roads run their straight course from south to north, roads that were marked by camps in strategic places and by Roman houses of stone in the sunshiny reaches of the hillsides. Rome is still everywhere in Wales: the way it thinks in politics, its speech, its literature,—and nowhere more beautifully than in the "Dream of Maxen Wledig." The Britons were in the sorry plight of having to choose between enemies; and of the two, Roman or heathen invader, the Romans were the more friendly and beneficent, for the wild birds of the heathen carried only fire on their wings, and alighted on the ripe grain to burn it, but the Romans maintained order and conferred power. There in this most ancient city of Segontium are still the walls of the Roman town as well as the more recent walls of the castle town, and a remain which suggests a Roman hypocaust; there coins and other fragments of this ancient empire are constantly being found. There the body of the father of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, was discovered in the reign of Edward I. And

Gallant Little Wales

Edward, brutal and practical though he was, had it interred with pomp and honour in the church.

The very size and strength of Carnarvon Castle as it still stands shows how important strategically Edward thought the town. That Roman stronghold which was there before the present castle must have been beautiful, too, if in the legend of "Maxen Wledig" we have recollection of what it was like. Both in the dream and with the messengers whom the Emperor sent, they traversed the land until they came to Snowdon. "Behold," said the messengers, "the rugged land that our master saw." And then they went forward until they saw Anglesey, and Aber Sain, and a castle at the mouth of the river. "And in the castle he saw a fair hall, of which the roof seemed to be all gold, the walls of the hall seemed to be entirely of glittering precious gems, the doors all seemed to be of gold. Golden seats he saw in the hall, and silver tables. And on a seat opposite to him he beheld two auburn-haired youths playing at chess. He saw a silver board for the chess, and golden pieces thereon. The garments of the youths were of jet black satin, and chaplets of

The City of the Prince of Wales

ruddy gold bound their hair, whereon were sparkling jewels of great price, rubies and gems, alternating with imperial stones. . . . And beside a pillar in the hall he saw a hoary-headed man, in a chair of ivory, with the figures of two eagles in ruddy gold thereon. Bracelets of gold were upon his arms, many rings were on his hands and a gold torque about his neck ; and his hair was bound with a golden diadem. He was of powerful aspect. A chessboard of gold was before him, and a rod of gold, and a steel file in his hand. And he was carving out chessmen. And he saw a maiden sitting before him in a chair of ruddy gold. Not more easy than to gaze upon the sun when brightest, was it to look upon her by reason of her beauty. A vest of white silk was upon the maiden, with clasps of ruddy gold at the breast, and a surcoat of gold tissue upon her, and a frontlet of ruddy gold upon her head, and rubies and gems were in the frontlet, alternating with pearls and imperial stones. And a girdle of ruddy gold was around her. She was the fairest sight that man ever beheld." What more beautiful in any castle to be, in any modern royal pageant of to-day or to-morrow, could there be than this

Gallant Little Wales

Helen of Wales of whom the Emperor dreamed and whom he sought and found? Unlike the other Grecian Helen, she left, not records of war and strife behind to attest her beauty, but serviceable roads over many of which we may still travel to-day.

With the exception of Alnwick, Carnarvon Castle is the finest in Great Britain. It is a wonderful creation of man, a thing of strength and beauty, of might and grace; its decorated castellated architecture, facing two ways towards the sea, giving it a visionary appearance of charm wholly lacking in the bulky massiveness of Conway and Harlech, — magic casements, these, as I said before, —

“opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

Its thirteen towers, pentagonal, hexagonal, octagonal, perfect in their slender grace from walls ten feet thick. About one hundred and fifty years ago, Pennant wrote: “This town is justly the boast of North Wales, for the beauty of situation, goodness of the buildings, regularity of the plan, and, above all, the grandeur of the castle, the most magnificent badge of our subjection.”

The City of the Prince of Wales

It was in the Eagle Tower in which Edward II, the first Prince of Wales,—though why they should forget their own valiant Gruffyd ap Llewelyn is more than the writer can see,—is supposed to have been born. The ivy clings now everywhere upon its castellated summits. Probably the famous tower was so called because of the bird carved upon its walls. “Within a little dark room of this tower,” says Pennant, “not twelve feet long, nor eight in breadth, was born Edward II; so little, in those days, did a royal consort consult either pomp or convenience.” Alas, the Prince was not born in that little tower as records well show! The Welsh refused to acknowledge the English king unless he would dwell in Wales. This was impossible; so their demands were modified to the requirement that the prince placed over them must be of their own nation and language and of an unblamable life. Queen Eleanor was about to be confined, and, although it was midwinter and harsh weather, the king sent for her and she was brought to Carnarvon where the first English Prince of Wales was born. As soon as Edward heard that the child was born he called the Welsh nobility together at Rhuddlan, ostensibly

Gallant Little Wales

to consult about the public good and safety of all Wales. Once there, he told them that in case he had to leave the country he would appoint in his place a prince who would fulfil the conditions they had given, provided they would obey him, naming one who had been "born in Wales, could speak no English, and whose life and conversation nobody could stain," and then named his own son just born in Carnarvon. In his seventeenth year, 1301, this Prince of Wales was formally invested, even as in 1911 another Prince of Wales was endued, "with a chaplet of gold round his head, a golden ring on his finger, and a silver sceptre in his hand." The title is never inherited, but is conferred by special creation and investiture.

Unfortunate for romantic tradition is it that Edward II built the Eagle Tower and was not born in it. But these are the facts of the case, and the people of Carnarvon know them perfectly well. Undoubtedly, however, this prince was born in the town. One feels indignant sometimes, perhaps often, in Wales at the value set upon celebrity, the celebrity which "pays"; at Denbigh the proud claiming of Stanley, the explorer, where the poor lad was knocked about



THE TOWER OF DOLBADARN ON LLANBERIS LAKE

The City of the Prince of Wales

and abused worse than some cur of the streets; the exploitation of Dr. Johnson, who happened to be with Mrs. Piozzi in the vicinity of Denbigh for a few days; and then this English Prince of Wales whom the Welsh insist upon having born in the tower which he himself built! Ah, well,—

“ Why should not gallant Taffy
Have his relics and his bones,
Llewelyns and Cadwallos,
And Griffyevanjones? ”

And we must just be willing to let this cherished Eagle Tower be an indispensable Welsh bone — or relic of contention.

The gateway of Carnarvon Castle is very impressive, of great size and strength, as are most of these North Wales castles, but, as is not the case with most of them, with romantic grace added. Vines clamber up it and over it, cracks etch the portions of the walls which are bare. Above the gateway, in its niche high out of reach of destructive enemies, is the figure of Edward II; and to the right and to the left graceful turrets rise above the walls. Low on the face of the gateway tower are slits for defence, above them at a safe altitude are windows .

Gallant Little Wales

with part of the tracery still intact. This entrance was besieged by Glendower in the fifteenth century and by a Parliamentary army in the seventeenth. Bitter battles were fought about the old gate and in the town beyond. One day at Carnarvon, when the peasant folk were holding a fair, one Madoc, who claimed to be the son of Llewelyn, burst into the market square, stormed the castle, and left the town a smouldering ruin.

But distant, far, far distant are those ancient days of primitive strife. And as I turned off my Snowdon road to enter by this castle gateway I had still in mind the peaceful, prosperous town through which I had come and the ships on the sea beyond and the shining island shore of Mona, mother of Wales. We paid our entrance fee and, as I was doing that, my eye caught sight of an old table there under the arch, littered with books for sale. I looked at the shimmering green grass beyond in the castle courtyard down upon which the sun was flooding. We were in no haste. I wanted to dally, and dally I did by the bookstall, my hand falling upon a first edition of Goldsmith's "Bee", to be sold at sixpence! We paid for it, and I could

The City of the Prince of Wales

hear my friend saying, "Do you suppose it really is a first edition?"

My fingers between the leaves of this book, I turned to and opened "A City Night-Peace," reading, "There may come a time when this temporary solitude may be made continual, and the city itself, like its inhabitants, fade away, and leave a desert in its room." Then we went through into the sunshine in the courtyard beyond, the book clasped tightly in my hand, and the hours passed as in a dream. There was the touch of time made visible, there was life carried forward even in the busy chirping of the birds upon the vine-covered walls, there was sunshine as it had been in those olden but not more golden days than this, there was the sound of voices, voices beloved so long, long ago, and speaking again; there was joy, and sorrow, living again for me and in me; there once more was all that eager, ardent, daily commonplace of human lives, that daily friendliness of little things which makes life so worth the living. I felt it in all about us, woven into everything, the cheerful noise of birds, the voices from beyond the castle walls, the sunshine, the colour; and more and more the spirit of the place took possession of me.

Gallant Little Wales

Again as in a dream within a dream we passed through the castle gateway out into the town with its simple old houses, its little shops with their signboards and gay windows, its inns and lodgings, past the Welsh children playing in the streets and their elders going gravely to and fro about their business, and the sleek horses and whirling motors, up the hill past Llanbeblig Church, the churchyard Watts-Dunton has used as part of the setting of his story "Aylwin," and on to the country road which, with thirteen miles' walking, would bring us home—to our Welsh home at the foot of Snowdon, Eryri, the home of eagles. Behind us, as we turned, the ships had become but white moths on a vast sea, Anglesey was growing dimmer, the cows pastured on the plain about the old town were but specks, the coast-line was merging into the water. But still the castle dominated everything, and I thought of Dr. Samuel Johnson's delight in that vast pile and his naïve record in the Cambrian journal: "I did not think there had been such buildings; it surpassed my ideas."

VII

The Eisteddfod

It was the first morning of my first Welsh National Eisteddfod, and I sat by the window working, and glancing away from my work to a hillside up which led narrow steps to the summits above, among which were hidden away some half a dozen tiny villages. Colwyn Bay, where the Eisteddfod was to be held, was — as the crow does *not* fly — about forty miles distant. It was a glorious morning of sunshine in which gleamed the river, glossy beeches and pines, and little whitewashed Welsh cottages. As I looked, there began to emerge from the steps a stream of people; down and down they flowed, bright in their pretty dresses or shining in their black Sunday-best broadcloth. All those mountain hamlets up above, reached by roads passable only for mountain ponies, were sending their men, women, and children to the Welsh festival of song and poetry.

Talking and excited about who would be chaired as bard, who would be crowned, what female choir would win in the choral contests, what

Gallant Little Wales

male choir, and discussing a thousand little competitions, even to a set of insertions for sheets, shams, and towels, we were borne on the train from Bettws-y-Coed swiftly through the Vale of Conway, beside the river, past Caerhŷn, the once ancient city of Canovium, past Conway Castle, with its harp-shaped walls still encircling the town, and so to Colwyn Bay.

Then all these enthusiastic people who had climbed down a hill to take the train, climbed up another to see the first Gorsedd ceremony. As we passed, from one of the cottages was heard the voice of a woman screaming in great excitement, "Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Jones, come to the front door quickly. There's some people going by; they're dressed in blue and white. Dear me, Mrs. Jones, they're MEN!" The procession, fully aware that Mrs. Jones, and all the little Joneses and all the big and middling Joneses, too, had come, went on gravely up, up, up the hill to "Y Fanerig" (the Flagstaff), where stood the "Maen Llog of the Gorsedd" and its encircling stones. The paths were steep, and even bards and druids are subject to *embonpoint*. Old Eos Dar, who can sing penillion with never a pause for breath, lost his "wind," and the

The Eisteddfod

“Bearer of the Great Sword of the Gorsedd” was no more to be found. A boy scout, perhaps thinking of Scott’s minstrel, who said, —

“The way was long, the wind was cold,
The minstrel was infirm and old,”

was despatched downhill after him, and found him and the sword, arm in arm, lagging comfortably behind. Druidical deportment is astonishingly human at times. But the hilltop achieved and wind recovered, the bards soberly made their way into the druidical circle of stones that surround the great Gorsedd stone. Nowhere, as the Archdruid remarked, had the Bardic Brotherhood been brought nearer heaven.

From the summit, north, east, south, west, the soft valleys, the towering mountains, the secluded villages, the shining rivers, and the great sea were visible. And there on this hilltop the bards, druids, and ovates dressed in blue and white and green robes, celebrated rites only less old than the Eye of Light itself. After the sounding of the trumpet (“Corn Gwlad”), the Gorsedd prayer was recited in Welsh, —

“Grant, O God, Thy Protection;
And in Protection, Strength;

[119]

Gallant Little Wales

And in Strength, Understanding ;
And in Understanding, Knowledge ;
And in Knowledge, the Knowledge of Justice ;
And in the Knowledge of Justice, the Love of it ;
And in that Love, the Love of all Existence ;
And in the Love of all Existence, the Love of God.
God and all Goodness."

Then the Archdruid, Dyfed, standing upon the Gorsedd stone and facing the east, unsheathed the great sword, crying out thrice, "Aoes Heddwch ?" (Is it peace ?) and the bards and ovates replied "Heddwch !" (Peace.)

There are some scholars who question the "identity of the Bardic Gorsedd with the druidic system." The Welsh Gorsedd, this side of the controversial point, is forty centuries old, and in all conscience that is old enough. Diodorus, the Sicilian, wrote, "There are, among the Gauls, makers of verses, whom they name bards. There are also certain philosophers and theologists, exceedingly esteemed, whom they call Druids." Strabo, the geographer, says, "Amongst the whole of the Gauls three classes are especially held in distinguished honour — the bards, the prophets, and the druids. The bards are singers and poets, the prophets are sacrificers

The Eisteddfod

and philosophers, but the druids, besides physiology, practised ethical philosophy." As far back as we can look in the life of the Cymru, poetry, song, and theology have been inextricably woven together. The Gorsedd was then, formally, for the Welsh people what it still is informally: a popular university, a law court, a parliament. The modern Gorsedd, with its twelve stones, is supposed to represent the signs of the zodiac through which the sun passes, with a central stone, called the "Maen Llog," in the position of the sacrificial fire in the druidical temple. A close reverence for nature, a certain pantheism in the cult of the druids, shows itself in various ways,—in the belief that the oak tree was the home of the god of lightning, that mistletoe, which usually grows upon the oak, was a mark of divine favour. The most prominent symbol of the Gorsedd is the "Broad Arrow" or "mystic mark," supposed to represent the rays of light which the druids worshipped. Even the colours of the robes of the druids, ovates, and bards are full of characteristic worship of nature; the druids in white symbolical of the purity of truth and light, the ovates in green like the life and growth of na-

Gallant Little Wales

ture, the bards in blue, the hue of the sky and in token of the loftiness of their calling.

Up there on the hilltop, with its vast panorama of hill and valley, sea and sky, time became as nothing. The Gorsedd became again the democratic Witenagemot of the Welsh, and there still were represented the mountain shepherd, the pale collier, the lusty townsman, the gentle knight, the expounder of law, the teacher and the priest. But if upon the hill time was as nothing, down below in the gigantic Eisteddfod pavilion some ten thousand people were waiting. "Gallant little Wales," which has certainly awakened from its long sleep, was past the period of rubbing its eyes. It was shouting and calling for the Eisteddfod ceremonies to begin, perhaps as the folk in Caerwys had called impatiently in the days of the twelfth century, or again in that old town in the days of Elizabeth, the last that memorable Eisteddfod when a commission was appointed by Elizabeth herself to check the bad habits of a crowd of lazy illiterate bards who went about the country begging.

That great Eisteddfodic pavilion, where the people were waiting good-naturedly but impatiently, is primarily a place of music. Even as

The Eisteddfod

in the world, so in Wales music comes first in the hearts of mankind and poetry second. And it may be, since music is more social and democratic, that the popular preference is as it should be. The human element in all that happens at a Welsh Eisteddfod is robust and teeming with enthusiasm. It is true that prize-taking socks, shawls, pillow shams, and such homely articles no longer hang in festoons above the platform as they did some twenty or thirty years ago. Now the walls are gaily decorated with banners bearing thousands of spiteful-looking dragons, and pennants inscribed with the names of scores of famous Welshmen, and with such mottoes as "Y Gwir yn Erbyn y Byd" (the truth against the world), "Gwlad y Mabinogion" (the land of the Mabinogion), "Calon wrth Galon" (heart with heart), and others.

After the procession of dignitaries was seated upon the platform, a worried-looking bard began to call out prizes for every conceivably useful thing under the sun, among them a clock tower which he seemed to be in need of himself as a rostrum for his throat-splitting yells. During these announcements the choirs were filing in, a pretty child with a 'cello much larger than

Gallant Little Wales

herself was taking off her hat and coat, a stiff, self-conscious young man was bustling about with an air of importance, and in the front, just below the platform, sat newspaper reporters, from all over the United Kingdom, busy at their work. Among them were the gray, the young, the weary, the dusty, the smart, the shabby, and one who wore a wig, but made up in roses in his buttonhole for what he lacked in hair. There were occasional cheers as some local prima donna entered the choir seats, and many jokes from the anxious-looking master of ceremonies.

At last the first choir was assembled, and a little lady, somebody's good mother, mounted upon a chair. The choir began to sing, —

“Come, sisters, come,
Where light and shadows mingle,
And elves and fairies dance and sing,
Upon the meadow land.”

The little lady never worked harder, her baton, her hands, her head, her lips, her eyes were all busy. Was it the Celtic spirit that made those elves and fairies *seem* to dance upon the meadows or did they really dance? The next choir was



LLANBERIS

From an old print



The Eisteddfod

composed of younger women, among them many a beauty-loving face, alas ! too pale and telling of the hard life of the hills or of the harder life of some mining-town. Of the third choir the leader was a merry little man, scarcely as high as the leader's stand, with a wild look in his twinkling eyes as he waved a baton and the choir began, —

“ Far beneath the stars we lie,
Far from gaze of mortal eye,
Far beneath the ocean swell,
Here we merry mermaids dwell.”

He believed not only in his choir, but also in those mermaidens, and so did the little lad, not much bigger than Hofmann when he first began to tour, who played the accompaniment. When that choir went out, a fourth came in, still inviting the sisters to come. At last the sisters not only came, but also decided to stay, and another choir lured the sailor successfully to his doom, and all was over, for even in choir tragedies there must be an end to the song. The gallant little mother had won the first prize. It takes the mothers to win prizes, and the audience thought so, too. The crowd yelled and stamped with delight.

Gallant Little Wales

When one asks one's self whether Surrey, for example, or such a state as Massachusetts in America, could be brought to send its people from every farm, every valley, every hilltop, to a festival thousands strong, day after day for a whole week, one realizes how tremendous a thing this Welsh national enthusiasm is. Educationally nothing could be a greater movement for Wales. To the Welsh the beauty of worship, of music, of poetry are inseparable. Only so can this passion for beauty, which brings multitudes together to take part in all that is noblest and best in Welsh life, be explained. Only so can you understand why some young collier, pale and work-worn, sings with his whole soul and shakes with the song within him even as a bird shakes with the notes that are too great for its body. These Welsh sing as if music were all the world to them, and in it they forget the world. Behind the passion of their song lies a devout religious conviction, and their song sweeps up in praise and petition to an Almighty God, who listens to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" as well as to some great hymn. To hear ten thousand Welsh people singing "Land of my Fathers," each taking naturally one of the four parts and all singing in perfect harmony, is

The Eisteddfod

to have one of the great experiences of life. To hear Shelley's "Ode" set to Elgar's music and sung by several choirs, to hear that wild, far-travelling wind sweep along in a tumult of harmonies, to know that every heart there was as a lyre even to the least breath of that wind, to hear that last cry, —

" Oh, wind,

If winter comes, can spring be far behind? " —

to listen again to those choirs late in the evening on the station platform with the sea dim and vast and muting the song to its own greater music, is to have felt in the Welsh spirit what no tongue can describe, — it is to understand the meaning of the word "hwyl," that untranslatable word of a passionate emotionalism.

All that went on behind the scenes the audience could not know. They saw only those considered by the adjudicators fit to survive. They did not see the six blind people, for even the blind have their place in this great festival, who entered the little school-room off Abergele Road to take the preliminary tests, the girl who played "The Harmonious Blacksmith," and, shaking from excitement and holding on to her guide, was led

Gallant Little Wales

away unsuccessful. They did not see the lad who played "Men of Harlech" crudely, his anxious ageing, work-worn mother sitting beside him, holding his stick and nodding her head in approval. All they heard were a selected two who were considered by the judges fit to play, a man both blind and deaf who performed a *scherzo* of Brahms and a Carnarvon sea-captain, now blind, who played on the violin. The quiet of the one-time sea-captain's face laid against the violin, the peace and pleasure in the lines about the sightless eyes, would have repaid the whole audience — even if the violinist had not been an exceptionally good player — for listening.

One of the inspiring and amusing events of the week was the discovery of a marvellous contralto. A young girl, shabbily dressed and ill at ease, came out to sing. Everything was being pressed forward towards the crowning of the bard, one of the great events of the Eisteddfod. People were impatient, and somewhat noisy. But as the girl began to sing they quieted down, then they listened with wonder, and in a minute you could have heard a pin drop in that throng of ten thousand. Before she had finished singing, "Jesu, Lover of my Soul," the audience knew

The Eisteddfod

that it had listened to one of the great singers of the world. When she had finished her song and unclasped her hands, she became again nothing more than an awkward, silly, giggling child whom Llew Tegid had to hold by the arm.

The audience shouted, "What's her name?"

"Maggie Jones," he replied; "that begins well."

"Where does she come from?" demanded the crowd.

"Police station," answered Llew Tegid lugubriously.

The audience roared with laughter and demanded the name of the town. Maggie Jones is the daughter of Police Superintendent Jones of Pwllheli. Perhaps in the years to come the world will hear her name again.

There are children at these Eisteddfodau whose little feet can scarce reach the pedals of a harp. Even the robins singing up in the high pavilion roof who had joined in the music from time to time, trilling joyously to Handel's "Oh, had I Jubal's Lyre," twittered with surprise that anything so small could play anything so large. But no one of the thousands there, even the children, grew tired for an instant, unless it was these

Gallant Little Wales

same robins, who were weary at times because of the cheerless character of some of the sacred music sung in competition and themselves started up singing blithely and gladly as God meant that birds and men should sing. The robins twittered madly when some sturdy little Welshman stepped into the penillion singing, accompanied by the harp, no more to be daunted than a child stepping into rope skipping. When the grown-ups had finished, two little children came forward and sang their songs, North Wales style.

The afternoon was growing later and later; it was high time for the name of the bard of the crown poem to be announced. At last, with due pomp, the name of the young bard was announced. Every one looked to see where he might be sitting. He was found sitting modestly in the rear of the big pavilion, and there were shouts of "Dyma fo!" (here he is). Two bards came down and escorted him to the platform, where all the druids, ovates, and bards were awaiting him. The band, the trumpeter, the harp, and the sword now all performed their service, the sun slanting down through the western windows on to this bardic pageant. The sparrows flew in and out of the sunlight, unafraid of the

The Eisteddfod

dragons that waved about them and the bands that played beneath them, and the great sword held sheathed over the young bard's head. The sword was bared three times and sheathed again as all shouted "Heddwch!" The bard was crowned and the whole audience rose to the Welsh national song.

What is the meaning of this unique festival of poetry and song? Mr. Lloyd George, who had escaped from the din of battle outside, and the jeers of the Goths and Vandals who could n't or would n't understand the Fourth Form, said, amidst laughter, that there was no budget to raise taxes for the upkeep of the Eisteddfod. Then he continued, "The bards are not compelled by law to fill up forms. There is no conscription to raise an army from the ranks of the people to defend the Eisteddfod's empire in the heart of the nation. And yet, after the lapse of generations, the Eisteddfod is more alive than ever. Well, of what good is she? I will tell you one thing — she demonstrates what the democracy of Wales can do at its best. The democracy has kept her alive; the democracy has filled her chairs; the sons of the democracy compete for her honours. I shall never forget my visit to the

Gallant Little Wales

Llangollen Eisteddfod two years ago. When crossing the hills between Flintshire and the valley of the Dee, I saw their slopes darkened with the streams of shepherds and cottagers and their families going towards the town. What did they go to see? To see a man of their nation honoured for a piece of poetry. . . . And the people were as quick to appreciate the points as any expert of the Gorsedd, and wonderfully responsive to every lofty thought." Yes, unlike any other gathering in the world, the Eisteddfod is all that. Long ago in the latter half of the eighteenth century Iolo Morganwg stated the objects of Welsh bardism,— "to reform the morals and customs; to secure peace; to praise (or encourage) all that is good or excellent." This national festival is the popular university of the people, it is the centre of Welsh nationalism, the feast of Welsh brotherhood. Only listened to in this spirit can one understand what it means when an Eisteddfodic throng, after the crowning of the bard, rises to sing "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau," —

"Old land that our fathers before us held dear."

VIII

Cambrian Cottages

IN the "Dream of Rhonabwy," from the "Mabinogion," one of the great books of the imaginative literature of the world, it is not a very pleasant picture which we get of a Welsh home. Yet the Welsh cottage home of to-day is a treasure of beauty and orderliness. Doubtless this picture from the "Dream of Rhonabwy," in its realistic detail, making allowances for certain Norman influences at work upon the various stories of the "Mabinogion," is a true one. The strength and rustiness of the colouring of the house of Heilyn Goch, the blackness of the old hall, the upright gable out of the door of which poured the household smoke, the floor inside full of puddles and slippery with the mire of cattle, the boughs of holly spread on the floor, and at one side of the hall an old hag making a fire, the yellow calf-skin it was a privilege for any one to get upon, the barley bread and cheese and milk which, after the people of the house had entered, — a ruddy, curly-headed man

Gallant Little Wales

with faggots on his back, and a pale slender woman, — they were given to eat; — all, I say, forms a picture rude, coarse, strong in its primitive detail of twelfth-century Cymric household life. Something more, too, it suggests. As Matthew Arnold says, “The very first thing that strikes one, in reading the ‘Mabinogion,’ is how evidently the mediæval story-teller is pilaging an antiquity of which he does not fully possess the secret; he is like a peasant building his hut on the side of Halicarnassus or Ephesus; he builds, but what he builds is full of materials of which he knows not the history, or knows by a glimmering tradition merely.”

There are other pictures, too, in the “Mabinogion” of early Welsh household life, pictures which one must question because of their luxury and general magnificence, features evidently due to the strong Norman influence one finds at work almost throughout these stories. No picture could be more rich and more beautiful than that in the “Dream of Maxen Wledig,” where Helen is found by the Emperor’s messenger sitting in the old castle hall at Carnarvon. These are the tales of the splendid, barbaric youth of a people, filled with the vividness, the

Cambrian Cottages

crowding, the vitality of youth, and touched to an even more magnificent beauty by another hand which was deliberate and Norman — stories divinely disregarding of what might have been intelligible; in their mystery and wonder full of the life of the young. Barbaric touches, magic, fantastic elements, crude life, gorgeous colouring, — all this and thrice more than this does one find in the “Mabinogion.”

At first dreaming, — for dream one must over the cottages of Wales if one is ever truly to enter them, — these homes of a more recent time would seem to have suffered a loss in vividness, in interest, so immeasurable that there could be no gain to balance against it. Gone are the mystery and the semblance of splendour; the sense of adventure and the strong, wild life of these earlier centuries are forever vanished. Yes, gone they are, and gone they were before ever a *rédacteur* took down one of the tales of the “Mabinogion” from report that was already becoming but tradition. Purposely did I select the “Dream of Rhonabwy,” for not only in closeness to human reality, but also in architectural detail, do I believe it to be an exact picture of early Welsh home life. After

Gallant Little Wales

the sordid picture of the hall, the description of the rainstorm comes but as a reinforcing touch of truthfulness: "And there arose a storm of wind and rain, so that it was hardly possible to go forth with safety. And being weary with their journey, they laid themselves down and sought sleep. And when they looked at the couch, it seemed to be made but of a little coarse straw . . . with the stems of boughs sticking therethrough, for the cattle had eaten all the straw that was placed at the head and at the foot. And upon it was stretched an old russet-coloured rug, threadbare and ragged; and a coarse sheet, full of slits, was upon the rug, and an ill-stuffed pillow, and a worn-out cover upon the sheet. And after much suffering from . . . the discomfort of their couch, a heavy sleep fell on Rhonabwy's companion. But Rhonabwy, not being able either to sleep or to rest, thought he should suffer less if he went to lie upon the yellow calf-skin that was stretched out on the floor. And there he slept." Undoubtedly here even the slit sheet is a touch of Norman elegance.

In the "Dream of Rhonabwy," not in the far more beautiful "Dream of Maxen Wledig," with its elaborate interior descriptions, do we

Cambrian Cottages

find something like prototype for the Welsh cottage of to-day: the fire made against the gable end, even as it is now in the cottages, the sleeping accommodations at the opposite ends. This is the arrangement still of the vast majority of the cottages. Originally probably there were no windows other than, it may be, little slits—"wind-eyes" they were called with that relevant quaintness characteristic of early speech—such as we see to this day in old Welsh barns. In the "Mabinogion" story of Geraint, with its white stag, its divergent sense of the forest and of a bustling town life and the beautiful Gwenhwyvar, there is reference to glass windows: "And one morning in the summer time they were upon their couch, and Geraint lay upon the edge of it. And Enid was without sleep in the apartment, which had windows of glass. And the sun shone upon the couch. And the clothes had slipped from off his arms and his breast, and he was asleep. Then she gazed upon the marvellous beauty of his appearance, and she said, 'Alas, and I am the cause that these arms and this breast have lost their glory and the war-like fame which they once so richly enjoyed.'" Are any lines in Tennyson's "Enid" taken from

Gallant Little Wales

this "Mabinogion" tale, that story upon which Tennyson's widest popularity was founded, more vivid than this beautiful romantic touch? Undoubtedly these glass windows which revealed the manly beauty of Geraint in overthrow were glass lattices. They could not have been very common, and considerably later they were followed by wooden lattices in general use in the Welsh cottage, and still occasionally to be found to-day. I have found them several times in the dairy-rooms of old cottages in North Wales. Norman influence was at work in this story of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century from the "Mabinogion." Sometime in the fourteenth or fifteenth century it was that the lattice window of the cottage came in, nor did it go out of use until the end of the seventeenth century. The window was a double frame—just as it is most frequently now—filled with woven diamond lattice. Within were wooden shutters opening inwards. A distant view or sketch of the leaded panes of to-day or of the diamond lattice of a long ago yesterday reveals no difference between the two, so closely has the type of window been kept, as, for example, the little, old-style windows of Beddgelert and Carnarvon.

Cambrian Cottages

And the beauty out upon which these old windows look is ever the same — Eryri, Eagle's Eyrie, is this land of North Wales. Peak, precipice, lake, rushing stream, valley, forest lie always before one, sometimes shrouded for a while by the mist, again pricked out in indescribable altitude of mountain or whiteness of falling water before eyes that cannot fail to wonder at their beauty. In the fourteenth book of the "Prelude," Wordsworth writes of the ascent which he and his Welsh friend made of Snowdon from Beddgelert at dawn, and we may, if we have not been in that mountain-cupped heart of Wales to hear it for ourselves, hear with Wordsworth the mounting

“roar of waters, torrents, streams,
Innumerable, roaring with one voice!”

And with the poet, too, behold an

“Emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity.”

The majestic beauty of these little Alps of Wales seems but to emphasize the cheerfulness and cosiness of the life man has made for himself. Indeed, nowhere are valleys greener, more sheltering, more homelike, more cosy. And

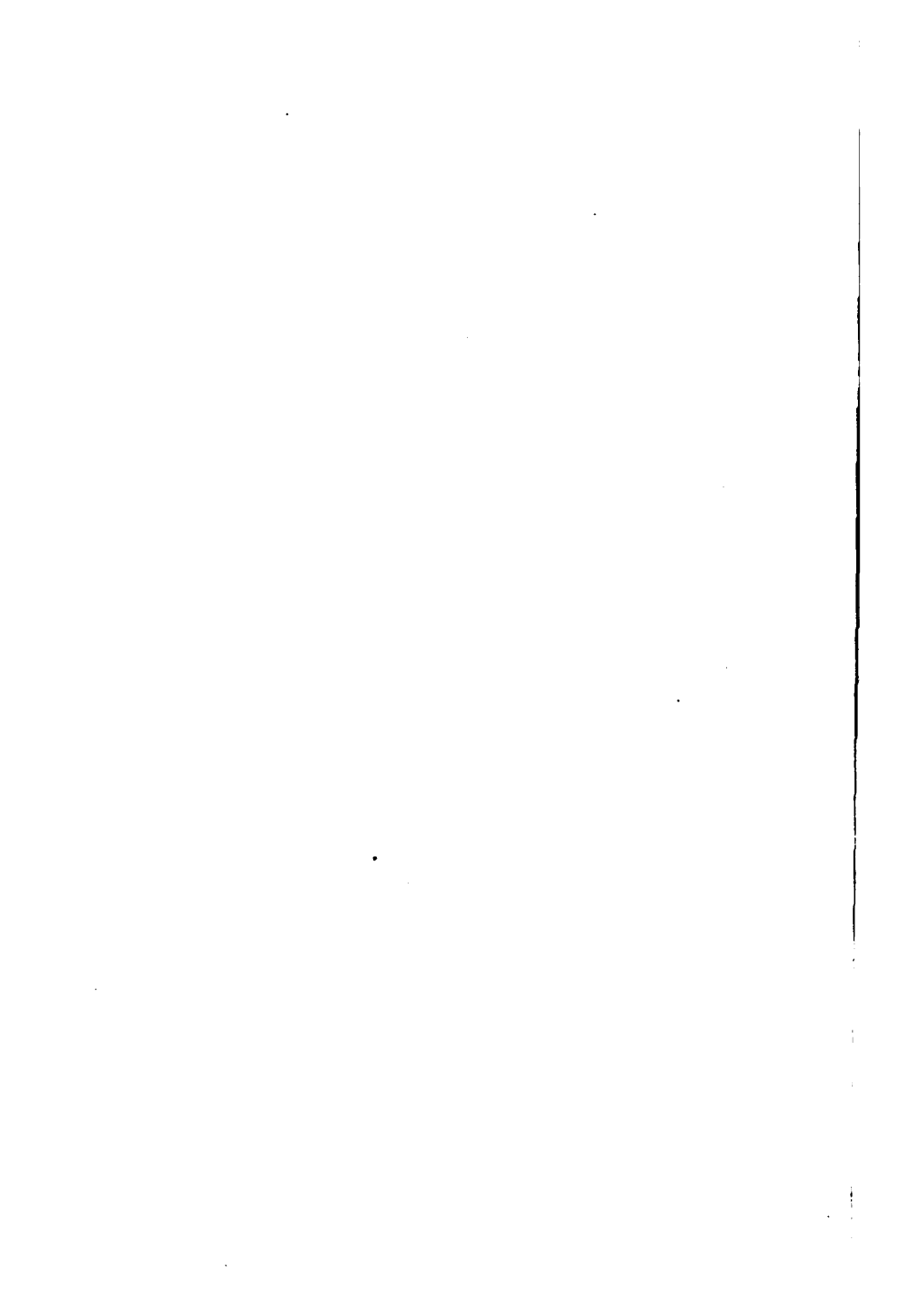
Gallant Little Wales

the cottages, with their ascending spirals of peat smoke, the sweet fragrance of their homely life, speak a language of welcome no one can mistake. Gone are the old barbaric days, with their rough, strong life, their adventure; gone are the days of chivalry, with their bright pageant, their luxury, their courtly ways. Here we may turn a stone of those mediæval days, there touch a fretted memorial of still earlier times, even before Arthur had come to wake the world to a new romance and a new and selfless endeavour. Lessened, cheaper may this humble cottage heritage of the present seem than those times which have gone their "journey of all days" into the past. But not so does this sweet homeliness seem to me. Life is gentler, life is better, perhaps even kinder within them by the bright hearth where, for the asking, any one may sit welcomed and at ease. Their purple roofs are but modest regal seal upon the happiness within. One feels singularly close to that great mother of us all in these tiny Welsh cottages, near to what is essential, what is real. Mortals who have not been dissevered from their proper feeling for houses will realize that these little homes have sprung, as it were, from the soil, that the



BEAUMARIS

From a proof before letters by Turner



Cambrian Cottages

cord binding them to the earth has never been cut.

The "Cyttiau Gwyddelod" or circular huts were the earliest forms of dwellings of which there are still remains. One finds them in various places on the meadows lying between and in front of Pen-y-Pass and Pen-y-Gwyrdd where Charles Kingsley loved to stop. There are many other places, too, one not far out of Barmouth where Tennyson stayed and where some of the stanzas from "In Memoriam" were written; and some near Bettws-y-Coed, one of whose valleys, the Lledr, Ruskin called the most beautiful in the world. The little circular rings of foundation stones are curiously disappointing, scarcely worth the seeing, except that, in touching them, it may be one presses a hand's breadth nearer to a vanished past. These circular huts lasted through a Roman-British period, and looked, probably, much like a wigwam, with a circular foundation wall of stone, wood, or wattle, from four to six feet high, capped with woven boughs of thatch, and within, a floor diameter from twelve to twenty-four feet. Gradually the circular hut gave place to the rectangular, at first with slight improvement in comfort,

Gallant Little Wales

as I think the picture of "Rhonabwy" suggests. There was still no chimney or ingie and the smoke poured out of the open doorway. Yet in the arrangement described in "Rhonabwy" we have embryonically the arrangement of to-day. The subdivision of the interior space was still to come.

The earliest examples extant of the rectangular type are of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Up till three years ago, when it was destroyed to make room for an extension of the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, such a little cottage there still was in Beddgelert, Ty Ucha. Such a cot there still is in Bettws-y-Coed, Dol y Waenydd; also Tyddyn Cynal, near Aber Conway, as well as Old Plas, Llanfair Fechan, to give but a few examples which any lover of Welsh life may consult for himself. These little cottages are to be distinguished by their roof principals, which start from the floor, heavy curved pieces of oak meeting at the ridge in the roof. No doubt the earliest churches were built in this fashion and the cottages were copied from them. The churches of old foundation which survive, however, are, as I have said in the chapter on the little churches of Wales, in the style the Latin monks

Cambrian Cottages

dictated and Llewelyn the Great introduced into Wales, — twelfth-century churches such as those at Llanrhychwyn, Gyffin, and Caerhŷn. Beyond question, Welsh cottages represent a native influence which antedates that of the oldest churches now extant in Wales.

In the Welsh women who sit by the ingle fire of this cottage life one feels an age-old continuity of home, of the heart of things, of association, of service, of beauty ; the pale slender woman of the “Dream of Rhonabwy” who entered the hall with the ruddy man ; the maiden with “yellow curling hair” whom, in the “Lady of the Fountain,” Owain sees through an aperture in the gate, a row of houses on either side of the maiden ; and others who kindle fires and perform the household tasks, who accoutre the knights, who embroider with gold upon yellow satin. Much of the colour of that mediæval world is a thing of the past, but not its women : they are essentially the same, though of a democratic to-day, simple as Enid in her worn habiliments when Arthur asked her what expedition this was and she replied, “I know not, lord, save that it behoves me to journey by the same road that he journeys.” The woman of to-day knows now

Gallant Little Wales

what that journey of her mate is, and still she goes with him, not driven before him, but by his side.

It was on the road that, as I studied these little cottages from week to week, I encountered the Welshwoman of both an olden romance and a present world of fact. Very humble little pilgrimages were these of mine, not made without their diverse experiences of joy and fatigue. Sometimes it was a little lane I travelled on foot, off the highroad and through the heart of a farmland, the hedges eight feet high with honeysuckle and heaven-deep with fragrance; again I dropped down a hill, heather and fox-glove making a royal display in bare places, and in the distance the bells of Llanycil ringing; or I climbed a hill on the way to Llangynog, a ridge which seemed the top and the edge of the world, treeless upland pastures like deep agate rich with ruby, lavender, brown and freaked with emerald green, purple and pink, and all opalescent with sunshine, dotted with black sheep and white sheep and little lambs, some straddling with surprise as they rose stretching and curling their tails with the delicious energy of awakening. Or, like Moses, I came down from Nebo, only it was a Welsh Nebo

Cambrian Cottages

and my hands were full of peppermints bought for twopence, and children, rosy-cheeked youngsters in a frenzy of joy, were running about me. Into strange places may even a cottage gleam lead. Once it took me to that most primitive of all shelters, a cromlech, where gorse made sunshine on the hill and heather made a glory, and in a near-by oat-field pansies bloomed, and, above, a crown of pines sung in the ever-blowing winds. Or the gleam led me beside some tiny stream, almost invisible, that found its way like a thread downhill.

“ Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river,
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,
Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Of lowly labour
I followed the gleam.”

A gleam that led me on and on was this

Gallant Little Wales

bright-shining, fragrant, humble cottage life of Wales, with its much-needed assurance, amidst the sorrows of our present times, that some magic of a life still full of faith is lived among these solitary hillsides, among busy towns and in sheltered Welsh valleys. Into human difficulties, too, did my gleam lead me, as gleams have a way of doing. My first adventure was to find a cottage called "Buarthau" (pronounced *Bee-ar-tbai*). I knew that it was on the hillside beyond Hendra Farm outside of Dolwyddelan, at the head of that valley, the Lledr, which Ruskin has called the most beautiful in the world. A child who spoke very little English summoned her mother, a pale, slender woman with a baby in her arms, to point out the cottage to me. The little girl led me and we climbed the steep hillside. Beside it were wild roses, cool in pink and green; beyond us was a magnificent view of Siabod, Snowdon, Aran, and Moel Hebog, becoming with every upward-mounting step more grand. The old roof of the sixteenth or seventeenth century which I had come to see was partly destroyed, the large curved principals which came almost to the ground had been well rubbed and gnawed by the teeth of kine.

Cambrian Cottages

Under a tree near a little cottage we ate our luncheon, a tree which accommodatingly turned itself into a harp. Then we came down, across the Lledr River, and turned and entered the village where the heart of the place is St. Gwyddelan's Church, built about 1500 A.D., with a rood screen removed from some earlier church, a knocker to claim sanctuary still upon the door, and warm hay piled high and spread in the sun over the old graves.

There was another day when I was in search of an old house still habitable, but of the same date of building as Buarthau. From Bettws-y-Coed I followed slowly up a long hill, from which I looked down into an ever-deepening valley, where lay the road leading up past the Conway and the Lledr to Dolwyddelan. After I passed Pentrevoelas, I picked up a little fellow carrying a school-bag. We passed a big empty graveyard place where five new graves were crowded against the wall,—the living were planning well for the jostling of the dead who were to come,—then I put the little fellow down by the chapel where his mother lived. The road to Giler grew more and more difficult. At last I came to a beautiful old house with a

Gallant Little Wales

fortified gate and high surrounding walls. Outside the walls, mother and daughter, farmer and farm hands, were all milking the cows. They courteously led me through the ancient gateway, a friendly place within, for not only did the cats run to meet us, but also the pigs. I ascended the outside steps of the fortified gateway into a room where was the Pryce coat of arms and the date 1623 upon the walls. Then we went into the farmhouse through an old doorway that would be the joy of any antiquary who might behold it. Even this was fortified. Within, the oak panelling, the oak partitions, the seats around the walls, the deep, small-paned, narrow windows, the kitchen, the storeroom, the dairy, the mill—all were as they had been four hundred years ago—a little the worse for wear, but still staunch, still comely, still generous and hospitable. One fireplace I stood before was twelve feet long and four or five feet deep. On the way home I saw a flock of lapwings in the meadow. I passed the chapel corner where the little fellow was; I saw two rabbits rubbing noses in the field; and then, facing toward the sun, which was setting over Siabod and the Ogwen Valley, I followed home.



A WELSH WATERFALL NEAR PENMAEN-MAWR

From an engraving by Boydell, 1750

Cambrian Cottages

These Welsh cottages and granges are like a well-made person or a well-made life: they have nothing to conceal. They reveal their construction, and their beauty inheres in this revelation of what they really are. Instead of being all daubed over with plaster and smeared with unattractive paper, their joists and beams, their panelled oak partitions, the ingle-heart of the house, the warm, brown oaken dressers and tri-darn, the grandfather clock and settles, the three-legged tables and three-legged chairs form a picture of simple harmony, which at its best it would be hard to rival either in dignity or homely beauty. I am not referring to the Welsh lodging-house which is all many an Englishman or American knows in Wales. The floor of the cottage may be but of beaten clay, neatly white-washed around the edge. This, however, is surely a more attractive floor covering than many which cost, even before they leave the carpet factory, a good deal more. Beautiful rooms are these where, from the lustre-ware, the pewter, the copper and brass and latticed windows, many a lesson is still to be learned by some of us who think it impossible that we should be able to take anything from so humble a place. In these

Gallant Little Wales

Welsh cottages life has continued more or less unchanged in a beautiful simplicity. It is not merely the simplicity imposed by poverty,—although that does exist to a depressing extent in Wales,—it is rather their sense of fitness, their love of what is beautiful, that innate instinct of theirs, not only for the right word, but also for the right beauty of a room, even of a kitchen. When they would imitate under the pressure of modern fussiness and vulgarities, something still holds them back. The lodging-house in Wales represents a concession to modernity, their mistaken and delicate tribute to the visitor. It is the Welsh farmhouse kitchen in all its dignity of use and beauty which represents the true life of the Cymri, the ineradicable æsthetic fineness of Gwalia. In Wales, and at a time when the world pays it but scant respect, poetry dwells everywhere and is at home. The grimmest coal centre, the dustiest slate quarry eating into the very bowels of the earth and the skin of the people, cannot drive poetry and music away from Wales. They dwell by the doorway of the whitewashed cottage in that group of oaks, or under that sheltering sycamore and the cottage roof of flower-

Cambrian Cottages

ing thatch, in the water-split stains of the slates upon the roofs, in the gleam of the doorsill over which one steps. Here in these Welsh cottages is simplicity as compelling, because more human and not less unself-conscious, as that of the palace.

Practically every characteristic possessed by the Welsh makes for love of home. Their very shyness drives them through the house door to the fireside, before all that is best can be revealed. Sensitive, full of feeling, gay and melancholy by turns, they are like their own hills, now sombre and now bright. It is temperament that makes the music of the Welsh cottage, its picturesqueness, its romance. Without the Cymric temperament there could have been no Welsh revivals, no invincible Lloyd George, no Eisteddfodau. The delicacy of the woman, who is always the home-maker, inheres in the Celt. He feels the significance of the home with such yearning and such passion that it is almost incomprehensible to his fellows of coarser fibre. It was that feminine love of home which made Celtic chivalry what it was. And I dare to say that it is still that element which makes the humble Welsh cottage what it is to-day.

Gallant Little Wales

Those qualities which caused the Cymri to reverence their bards and esteem learning are the qualities at work in their lives now. The passionate admiration which in olden times made them follow a leader like Llewelyn the Great or a lost cause, is what makes them shout by the tens of thousands for Lloyd George to-day and a winning cause. Their low, quiet voices, their gentle ways, their spiritual intensity, all throw a glamour about the lives they lead. One does not expect to find a sage in yon little cottage where the village bread is baked. Yet he is there, his books two deep on every shelf of his little room, his lamp burning far into the night. Nor does one expect to find a Welsh Jenny Lind in this cot whose brass door-sill we have just left; but, busy about her work, a voice the world might well run to listen to follows us down these Welsh upland meadows. And behind that counter, over which we buy sweets for the children, is an historian and antiquary; in yon post-office a bard, — even the very farmer spends his leisure not as other farmers do; and nothing is as many, in their commonplaceness, their German *Gemeinbeit*, expect and demand that it shall be.

Cambrian Cottages

It is a far cry, some may think, from the "Mabinogion," one of the possessions of all the world, to a little Welsh cottage. No, it is not a far cry; it is a history, interrupted here and there by haunting words, broken by words not to be recovered, but still a history from those first (?) "cyttiau gwyddelod," with their rude music of harp and their tales read from a revolving wooden book, down to this cot whose shelter we have sought in a valley or upland meadow, even as Wordsworth some one hundred years ago or Shelley sought such shelter at the base of Snowdon. It is a far cry, some may think, from that smoke curling out of the gable end of the hall in the "Dream of Rhonabwy" to this ingle by which we have sat. No, it is a development, a continuance marked only by the steps of man's desire to strengthen and make more perfect his home here, forgetting that Chaucer has told us in his poem "Truth":

"Her nis non hom, her nis but wilderness :

Forth, pilgrim, forth ! Forth, beste, out of thy stal !"

For the gray of a gray day outside, here by this hearth is the rose of fire, the tongue of flame by which we warm ourselves, the fluttering of those

Gallant Little Wales

dreams beneath which we hide ourselves as under a sheltering wing. The passionate heart of a passionately sensitive people is this hearth and flame of a Welsh cottage. To have lived by it is to have lost the need to hear those tonic words of Matthew Arnold, for here, indeed, the Celt may still, in his dreams, his love, his song, react against the despotism of fact. And outside is a world of magic, sometimes hostile but more often friendly, a world of beauty and of enchantment. From the "Dream of Rhonabwy," its women, its homes, its organized life, its beauty, down to the castle and cottage in Carnarvon or Conway, it is but one history, however many stages that history may have passed through; and until the traveller or the alien in Wales realizes this fact, he passes blindfold through its valleys and over its mountains and in and out of its cottage doors.

IX

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

Old Time . . . gentlest among the Thralls
Of Destiny, upon these wounds hath laid
His lenient touches, soft as light that falls,
From the wan Moon, upon the towers and walls,
Light deepening the profoundest sleep of shade
WORDSWORTH, "Ruins of a Castle in North Wales."

THE more one lives in Wales the more one recognizes the need for nonconformity. The Established Church has frequently conformed too much, certainly to the bars found in all public inns, and probably to the "jorum" measure set by castle life and even by the abbey life that is now no more. No doubt, if there were less poverty, there might be less drinking; on the other hand, if there were less drinking, there would certainly be less poverty. Even now, as I write in the most respectable old inn in Denbigh, — the place where all the gentry go, — for an inn sign I am looking out on three liquor kegs crossed one above another with a bunch of grapes pendant.

But the hill on which this quaint, small, pro-

Gallant Little Wales

sperous town of Denbigh is built does the best it can by its steepness to keep the people in good condition. In Welsh Denbigh Castle is called "Castell Caledfryn-yn-Rhos," the "Castle of the Craggy Hill in Rhos." From the "bottom," as the natives call the foot of the town and hill, — they are identical, — it is a sheer climb to the top where the castle is situated, and in that climb one has traversed the entire village. Close by the castle is the Church of St. Hilary, more or less falling to pieces now, where once masses were said for the soul of Henry de Lacy. Within the castle enclosure, in a tiny cottage, John Henry Rowlands, or Stanley, the African explorer, was born. Very eager is Denbigh to claim this distinguished man, and but little can you get them to say about the brutal treatment which drove him away from home and made him a wanderer upon the face of the earth. Denbigh claims Twm o'r Nant also, — he is buried at the bottom of the town in Whitchurch, — but not content with claiming him, they canonize him with the absurd name of "Welsh Shakespeare." Born in 1739, he developed, without any educational advantages whatsoever, remarkable skill in the writ-

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

ing of interludes, which for many years he himself played up and down the country, and by which, because he championed the cause of the people "against the evils of the day," he got the ear of his popular audiences. Denbigh claims Dr. Samuel Johnson, too, and exaggerates his brief visit to Middleton at Gwaenynog. They have even photographed one cottage and called it Johnson's.

A few miles west from Denbigh, at Rhuddlan, they have made the most of their history, but it is not recent; rather it is standardized and dignified by an antiquity which antedates even the ivy-covered ruins of the castle. There starlings flutter in and out, — perhaps a descendant of that starling which Branwen had taught to speak and who carried across the sea to Carnarvon, to her brother, Bendigeid Vran, the tale of her sufferings. There, too, are the fireplaces of an ample hospitality which is no more. I thought of the promise Edward had made in Rhuddlan that he would give the people a prince born in Wales and who could speak no English. I thought of that battle between Saxon and Welsh, in 769, on Morfa (marsh) Rhuddlan, which, before our eyes, stretched gently and mysteriously

Gallant Little Wales

away to the sea, and of the song that had commemorated it and of the defeat of the Cymru: —

“Calm the sun sets o’er the hills of Carnarvon,
Deep fall the shadows on valley and lea,
Scarce a breath ripples the breast of old ocean,
Faint on the ear falls the roll of the sea.”

Also in the old song is heard again the din of weapons, the hissing of arrows, and the cries of those who fought and those who fell. Even in its English translation it is still a stirring old song.

On the coast, a few miles north of Rhuddlan, is one of the most famous castles in British history, Flint Castle; but a dolorous, sorrowful old place it is now, set down in the midst of belching smokestacks and a sooty modern life that cares nothing for it. At Flint the dismantling of Richard II was performed. Froissart, the chronicler, speaking of Richard’s departure from Flint Castle in the custody of the Duke of Lancaster, tells us a strange story. King Richard had a beautiful greyhound who loved him beyond measure. As the Duke and the King were conversing in the court of the castle, the greyhound was loosed and immediately ran to the

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

Duke, paying him all the attentions he had always given to the King. The Duke asked what was the meaning of this fondness. "Cousin," replied the King, "it means a great deal for you and very little for me."

Above Flint, on the River Dee, is Hawarden Castle, the new residence and the old ruin made famous to us in recent years by the fact that William Ewart Gladstone lived there. And there, centuries ago, Llewelyn, the great Welsh prince, first saw his Eleanor. The people in this vicinity are called "Harden Jews." In this connection an interesting story from legendary history is told. It was in the year 946 that Cynan ap Ellis ap Anarawd was king of North Wales and a Christian church stood there. In this church was a roodloft surmounted by a figure of the Virgin bearing a holy cross in her hands. The summer had been hot and dry and the people began to pray for rain. Lady Trawst, wife of Sytsylt, governor of the castle, was one of those who prayed most often to the image. One day while she was on her knees the cross fell and killed her. The weather continued hot and the indignant people decided to bring the rood to trial for the murder of Lady Trawst. This was

Gallant Little Wales

done and the Virgin and cross sentenced to be hanged, but Spar of Mancot, one of the jury, thought drowning would be better. Finally the judgment was partially amended and the image was laid upon the beach and the tide did the rest. It was carried up to the walls of Chester, and the citizens of that town, ancient even in 946, reverently took it up and buried it, setting above it a monument with this inscription upon it: —

“ The Jews their God did crucify,
The Hardeners theirs did drown,
Because their wants she 'd not supply,
And lies under this cold stone.”

And from this time forth the river, which had been called the Usk, was called Rood Die or Dec. .

It is not possible to re-create that olden castle life in Wales. A fragment here and a fragment there one finds, and when the broken life has been put together again, as in the “Mabinogion,” the Norman influence is more than a varnish to its ancient surface,— it is often colour, with occasionally an entirely new figure painted in. Glimpses of the palace life do we get, of the



BEDDGELEERT, A VALLEY-SHELTERED HOME

From an old print

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

sleeping-rooms and halls and chambers, of beautiful buildings, of youths and pages, of vestures of silk and gold and yellow robes of shining satin. Pictures of maidens, too, there are, who live for us still as if they had not vanished from within walls which Time has partially destroyed. One maiden there was who was made from the blossoms of the oak and of the broom and of the yellow meadow sweet, and whom they called Blodeuwedd or Flower-face. Another, not Blodwen, but Olwen, she who was clothed in a "robe of flame-coloured silk . . . more yellow was her head than the flower of the broom, and her skin was whiter than the foam of the wave, and fairer were her hands and her fingers than the blossoms of the wood anemone amidst the spray of the meadow fountain. . . . Four white trefoils sprung up wherever she trod. And therefore was she called Olwen." Pictures, too, there are in the "Mabinogion" and elsewhere of the castles in which these maidens embroidered, sitting in golden chairs and clad in yellow satin. One description there is in "The Lady of the Fountain," which is a vivid picture of a Welsh castle: "And at length it chanced that I came to the fairest valley in the world, wherein were trees of

Gallant Little Wales

equal growth ; and a river ran through the valley, and a path was by the side of the river. And I followed the path until midday, and I continued my journey along the remainder of the valley until the evening : and at the extremity of a plain I came to a large and lustrous castle, at the foot of which was a torrent." The fair valley, the path by the riverside, the lustrous castle, the torrent — all are still a part of the life of Wales to-day. Again, for the mere opening of a book, we may see knights in their encounters as of old : the horse that pricks forward, the furious blows upon the faces of the shields, the broken armour and bursting girths, and then the battle on foot, their arms striking sparks, and blood and sweat filling their eyes. Nowhere in all literature is there a more beautiful picture of a horse than in *Kilhwch and Olwen* : " And the youth pricked forth upon a steed with head dappled gray, of four winters old, firm of limb, with shell-formed hoofs, having a bridle of linked gold on his head, and upon him a saddle of costly gold. And in the youth's hand were two spears of silver, sharp, well-tempered, headed with steel, three ells in length, of an edge to wound the wind, and cause blood to flow, and swifter than the fall of the

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

dewdrop from the blade of reed-grass upon the earth when the dew of June is at the heaviest. A gold-hilted sword was upon his thigh, the blade of which was of gold, bearing a cross of inlaid gold of the hue of the lightning of heaven ; his war-horn was of ivory. Before him were two brindled, white-breasted greyhounds, having strong collars of rubies about their necks, reaching from the shoulder to the ear. And the one that was on the left side bounded across to the right side, and the one on the right to the left, and like two sea-swallows sported around him. And his courser cast up four sods with his four hoofs, like four swallows in the air, about his head, now above, now below. About him was a four-cornered cloth of purple, and an apple of gold was at each corner, and every one of the apples was of the value of an hundred kine. And there was precious gold of the value of three hundred kine upon his shoes, and upon his stirrups, from his knee to the tip of his toe. And the blade of grass bent not beneath him, so light was his courser's tread as he journeyed towards the gate of Arthur's Palace."

Charming pictures of friendship there are, too, lived within castle and abbey ; and descriptions

Gallant Little Wales

of the love of birds and journeys taken upon sea and land; and harsh and barbaric touches to remind us of a past still more ancient and of a cruelty still more primitive. Possible flashes do we get of the humour of this olden life: the refreshing gentleman in Branwen, the daughter of Llyr, whom no house could ever contain; Bendigeid Vran, the brother of Branwen, that good brother who sat upon the rock of Harlech looking over the sea, and all unconsciously welcoming those who were to break the heart of the sister he loved. Poetry and wisdom also there are in this ancient life: the Coranians, who, however low words might be spoken, if the wind met that speech, it was made known to them; and Arthur granting a boon in words which are a poem in themselves, — “as far as the wind dries, and the rain moistens, and the sun revolves, and the sea encircles, and the earth extends.” “There is no remedy for that which is past, be it as it may,” said Luned. And in the “Mabinogion,” as in every life, there was one door which when those who were bearing the head of Bendigeid Vran to London opened and looked through, “they were as conscious of all the evils they had ever sustained, and of all the

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

friends and companions they had lost, and of all the misery that had befallen them, as if it had all happened in that very spot."

South from Flint and south from Hawarden, yet near the windings of the river Dee, is Castle Dinas Bran, "Crow Castle," as the English call it, mistakenly turning "Bran," a word whose actual meaning is unknown, into "Crow." Scarcely a stone of this very famous and ancient old castle situated on a high hill is left intact. The very rubble of its walls is exposed. Of the castle there is not enough left to repay any one for a visit, except a lover of desolation. Here, in another land, are walls like those of Balclutha, and desolate are they. Here the fox looks out of the window and the rank grass waves about its head, and here on the wind the song of mourning lifts itself bewailing the days that are gone. Yet from the valley below, with its quaint old town of Llangollen, its wonderful Abbey of Valle Crucis, and the shimmering of the running waters of the river Dee, the present is a reassuring one. Smoke curls up cheerfully from scores of household chimneys. The sun shines down upon the abbey walls, upon the chapter house, still intact, and upon the broken walls of the church itself.

Gallant Little Wales

"Ivy'd Valle Crucis ; time decay'd
Dim on the brink of Deva's wandering floods,
Your ivy'd arch glittering through the tangled shade,
Your gray hills towering o'er your night of woods ;
Deep in the vale recesses as you stand,
And, desolately great."

Inseparable from and a part of the spiritual beauty of this scene is the thought of the old blind rector, who is now custodian of the abbey and who still speaks lovingly of the beauty of the things he can no longer see. He has been there twenty-nine years, and through many of those years he has been going blind. Yet he told us cheerfully that he was greatly encouraged by our interest. "I never destroy anything that is old," he said ; "I stick to the old." As we stood there talking, the lovely little white English daisies looking up from the grass at us, the venerable old man told us something of his work. He was much discouraged because people were not interested, and even as he leaned on his stick, doubtless hoping for other visitors, his ear-sight quickened by the eye-sight he had lost, people were passing by outside walking toward the Pillar of Eliseg and a wooded vale beyond.

In Llangollen, the village near the abbey, lived

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

and died the ladies of Llangollen, two dear, quaint, sentimental souls, with personalities sufficiently marked and fearless so that they were unafraid to be themselves. Louisa Costello, in her account of a Welsh tour, gives them rather sharp treatment. She says that they were foolish, condescending, proud, vain, and pompous, yet she admits that they were charitable and considerate of their neighbours. Of their friendship she has nothing good to say. In a word, they were a couple of eccentric sentimentalists and both frightfully ugly. With the larger charity of the man, Wordsworth, who paid them a visit and wrote them a sonnet, described their appearance in the following words, "So oddly was one of these ladies attired that we took her, at a little distance, for a Roman Catholic priest, with a crucifix and relics hung at his neck. They were without caps, their hair, bushy and white as snow, which contributed to the mistake." In the sonnet addressed to them there are, among others, two lines of pure tribute:—

"The Vale of Friendship, let this spot
Be named; there, faithful to a low roofed Cot,
On Deva's banks, ye have abode so long;

Gallant Little Wales

Sisters in love, a love allowed to climb,
Even on this earth, above the reach of Time."

Lady Eleanor Butler was the daughter of the Earl of Ormond. She was born in Dublin and was both wealthy and beautiful. The Honourable Miss Ponsonby, a member of an ancient family, was an early friend of Lady Eleanor. She, too, was born in Dublin, and both lost their parents at the same time. They loved independence and did not love their suitors. Many things drew them together and, as Wordsworth aptly phrases it, they retired into notice in the Vale of Llangollen. Now they lie buried there, their faithful servant, Mrs. Mary Carryll, lying in an equal grave beside them.

In this neighbourhood are many castles, among them Chirk the property of Lord Howard de Walden, and Ruthin Castle which is not very interesting. About northwest from Llangollen lies the old town of Conway, with its castle and its rare old Plas Mawr. Suetonius says that the chief motive assigned by the Romans for the invasion of Britain was that they might obtain possession of the Conway pearl fisheries. One of the Conway pearls, now no longer much thought of, was placed in the regal crown and

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

presented by Sir R. Wynne to Richard II. The picturesqueness of Conway streets is greater than that of any other North Walian town. Little gable ends look out and down upon the streets like curious eyes. The houses are irregular and there are odd turns and twistings of the streets; cobblestones and old flagstones and an occasional black-and-white house; and everywhere glimpses through castle gate or over castle wall. The exterior of the castle is still singularly perfect; only one part of it seems to be falling, that nearest the river and looking out upon the sea. Overlooking the town, upon the river, is Queen Eleanor's oratory: —

“In her oryall then she was
Closyd well with royall glas :
Fulfullyd it was with ymagery,
Every windowe by and by,
On each side had ther a gynne
Sperde with manie a dyvers pynne.”

It matters not now whether this was a place of prayer or place in which the Queen arrayed herself. Pennant, when he made his famous “Tour in Wales,” described Conway as castle of matchless magnificence, and a matchlessly magnificent Castle it still is.

Gallant Little Wales

It takes but a single effort of the imagination to see again the life within that ancient harp-shaped town as it must have been even so recently as seventy-five years ago: the varying colours of the peasants' dresses, their large market-baskets and umbrellas, their bright handkerchiefs, the tall North Walian beaver hats and frilled caps peeping out beneath, the bright cheeks and even brighter pink cotton jackets worn by the girls. Healthy, well-made peasants those, neat of garb and gay of heart, good-looking, both men and women. Again the old market-place, beyond Plas Mawr and the church, rings with their laughter and their lively barter, and the clatter of their ponies' hoofs; again the soft voices of the women are heard and the heavier voices of the men; again they mount their horses, sometimes double, and ride away out of the lively town to the silent hills beyond, through Gyffin, where the colours in the old barrel vault of the church must have been even brighter than they are now; perhaps they go as far as some hillside like that on which Llangelynin still keeps its gray sanctuary. Again down upon the old town settles a double silence. The day's work is done; twilight has come, and over

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

all reigns a stillness which is as that of a Welsh Sabbath.

Through the Vale of Conway, past Trevriw and Llanrwst with its Gwyder Castle, past beautiful Bettws-y-Coed and Capel Curig, and on to the Pass of Llanberis, a walk of unrivalled beauty, there appears at last, as one travels down to Pen-y-Pass (the head of the pass), the single tower of the ruined castle of Dolbadarn. A Welsh triad says there are three primary requisites for poetry: an eye that can see nature, a heart that can feel nature, and a resolution that dares follow nature. No one can come down from this road over the towering summits of Snowdon to the little green valley in which Dolbadarn lies without, for the time, becoming a poet, even to the resolution that dares follow the spiritual counsels which come from sky and mountain and rushing stream and the very rocks that fill this valley. "Nature has here," says Camden, "reared huge groups of mountains, as if she intended to bind the island fast to the bowels of the earth, and make a safe retreat for Britons in the time of war. For here are so many crags and rocks, so many wooded valleys, rendered impassable by so many lakes, that the

Gallant Little Wales

lightest troops, much less an army, could never find their way among them. These mountains may be truly called the British Alps; for, besides that they are the highest in the whole island, they are, like the Alps, bespread with broken crags on every side, all surrounding one which, towering in the centre, far above the rest, lifts its head so loftily, as if it meant not only to threaten, but to thrust it into the sky."

The better one comes to know the castles of North Wales, the more is one impressed with the extraordinary ability shown in fortifying every access into the country. Dolbadarn itself is ancient; whether it dates from before or after the Roman Conquest is doubtful; it was with the thought of Llanberis Pass in mind that Tenyson wrote his "Golden Year"; it was there that he heard

" the great echo flap

And buffet round the hill from bluff to bluff."

Here in this castle Owen Goch was imprisoned by his brother Llewelyn. To this prisoner a bard, Howel Voel ap Griffi ap Pwyll Gwyddel, composed his Welsh awdl, or ode, called "The Captive of Dolbadarn." The feeling in this



THE SUMMIT OF SNOWDON

From an old print

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

poem is still quick even after all the changes of the centuries and even with all the loss from translation:—

“ His palace gates no more unclose,
No harp is heard within his hall,
His friends are vassals to his foes,
Grief and despair have vanquished all.
He, the defender, — he, the good and just, —
Is gone ; his name, his honour, in the dust !

“ He prized but treasures to bestow,
He cherish'd state but to be free ;
None from his walls unsped might go,
To all he gave, but most to me !

“ Ruddy his cheeks as morning's light,
His ready lance was firm and bright,
The crimson stains that on it glow
Tell of the Saxon's overthrow.

“ Shame, that a prince like this should lie
An outcast, in captivity.
And oh ! what years of ceaseless shame,
Should cloud the Lord of Snowdon's name ! ”

Professor O. M. Edwards, in his book called “ Wales,” describes Dolbadarn as the last home of Welsh independence.

Gallant Little Wales

Hundreds of years before the sad, peace-loving life of Llewelyn had played its great part in Welsh history, in the valley that runs from the head of the pass along the low margin of beautiful Gwynant Lake, by a little river that talks gayly in all weathers but most gayly in the stormiest, past Llyn (lake) Dinas to Beddgelert, — in this valley is situated on Dinas Emrys some fragments and traces of one of the oldest and most important strongholds in Great Britain. This was the fort of Merlin who “called up spirits from the vasty deep.” There is melancholy and romantic interest to be found on the summit of Dinas Emrys, tracing what still remains. Something there is, perhaps enough for the archæologist to re-create all that has been lost. On this same road, some thirteen miles beyond, lies Carnarvon Castle, of whose history and beauty I have written in “The City of the Prince of Wales.”

In the “Mabinogion” there are wild-wood touches showing aspects of the life the Cymru had lived. The redactor of the old story of Branwen says: “Then they went on to Harlech . . . and there came three birds and began singing unto them a certain song, and all the songs

Castles and Abbeys in North Wales

they had ever heard were unpleasant compared thereto; and the birds seemed to them to be at a great distance from them over the sea, yet they appeared as distinct as if they were close by." And again, "In Harlech you will be feasting seven years, the birds of Rhiannon singing unto you the while." Just as the "Dream of Maxen Wledig" is in a sense the story of Carnarvon Castle, so is this tale of Branwen, the "fair-bosomed," full of pictures and suggestions of Harlech Castle, Bendigeid Vran (the blessed) sitting on a rock and looking out to sea, — across that enchanted bay, on the other side of which lies Criccieth Castle, while the King of Ireland, Matholwch, his ships flying pennants of satin, comes wooing the sister of Branwen. A strange story this which has come out of that old castle stronghold, its royal Irish lover, its good Bendigeid Vran, its beautiful Branwen, the tame starlings and the singing-birds of Rhiannon, and that cry of Branwen, "Alas, woe is me that I was ever born"; and after that cry, the heart that broke and was buried in the four-sided grave on the banks of the Alaw.

Harlech Castle was probably originally built about the middle of the sixth century by a Brit-

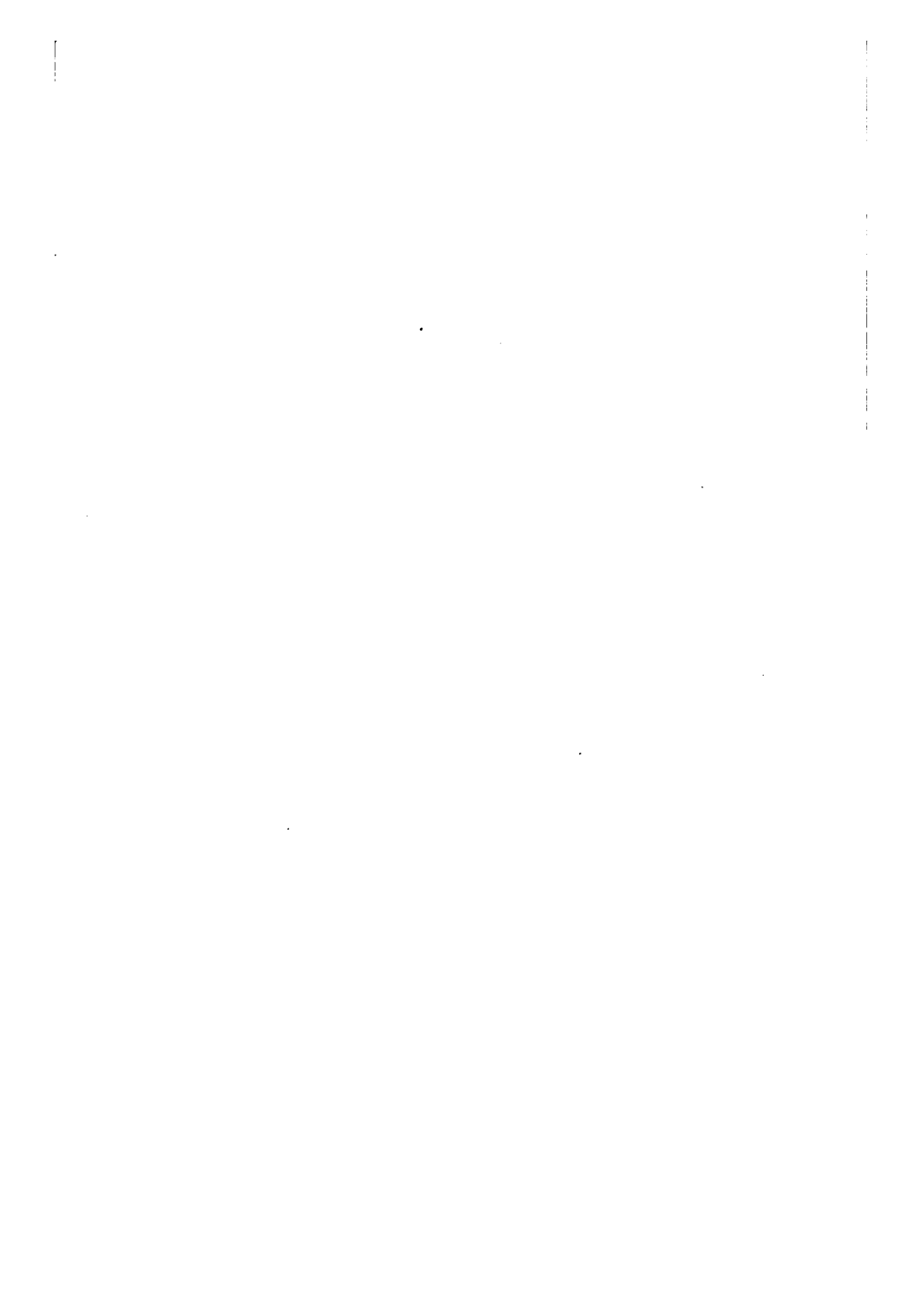
Gallant Little Wales

ish prince. Edward I constructed the present castle on the ruins of the former one. It was finished in the thirteenth century and became the seat of many conflicts between Owen Glendwr and the English. Thither heroic Margaret of Anjou fled, following the battle of Northampton. It was the last of the castles to hold out for Charles. The whole life of this stronghold has been heroic, stupendous in size, gallant in its human figures, impressive in its human sorrows, indomitable in its human courage. Here, and in the other castles of North Wales, many of those strange prophecies of Taliessin have been fulfilled or in part fulfilled, something at least of

“All the angels’ words
As to peace and war.”

THE END

Appendix



APPENDIX

*Suggestions for Some Tours*¹

At the junction of the Llugwy and Conway valleys, embowered in trees, cut by rushing streams, surrounded by mountains, among them Siabod, the Glyders, and some of the lesser hills of Snowdonia, is Bettws-y-Coed, one of the most beautiful and, be it said, the most comfortable villages in all North Wales. There are good inns, good lodgings, excellent train-service, coaches,—all that mankind in a holiday humour can desire. This little “chapel in the woods” is a place rich in beautiful legend, near the sea, in the midst of mountains, for the sportsman blessed with good fishing and good hunting. Artists go there, and where artists go, others can afford to follow. The Lledr Valley, which meets the Conway just outside of Bettws, Ruskin called the most beautiful valley in the world. At Bettws-y-Coed, I think, are as fine headquarters as any in North Wales for a series of tours. The Waterloo Hotel, the Royal Oak, the Gwydir are all good hotels, well run, sanitary, and with excellent food. In Bettws, too, there is a first-

¹ Buy anywhere you happen to be in Wales, *The Gossiping Guide to Wales*; its maps, big and small, and its text answer all questions. Price, one shilling.

Appendix

rate garage from which you can get good cars at any time.

Repeated experience of life in North Wales in its most isolated, tiny hamlets, where the tourist had never been before and where it was impossible to secure lodging; experience in the small towns like Conway and Carnarvon, full of association, quiet and yet prosperous; and experience in the larger centres of Welsh life, have given me a perspective which is, perhaps, uncommon. The great advantage of Bettws is that you can not only get everywhere from that delightful place, but that you can also be most comfortable at a reasonable rate.

If you are touring in an automobile you will find each one of the tours which I suggest food merely for a day of comfortable delight. If you are walking, or driving, these tours can be broken up and shortened or extended indefinitely.

For the **FIRST DAY** go up the Vale of Conway, stopping at Trefriw. On your way to Trefriw, you will pass through Llanrwst, which, dear old market-town that it is, will for liveliness on a market-day suggest Piccadilly rather than a little Welsh town. There from miles around—and if you wish to see a Welsh market you cannot do better than to go to Llanrwst, for during centuries it has had a great reputation as a place of barter—there from miles around, the Welsh peasants gather, and there you will see

Appendix

Welsh household articles which you could not find in any shop. There is much in Llanrwst worth taking a glimpse at, the old bridge built by Inigo Jones which would be enough to send a well-regulated motor car to the madhouse, but from the artist point of view is still useful; the little cottage by the bridge, Gwydir Castle just beyond the cottage, not a tumble-down castle either, but resplendent with gorgeously carved furniture and Spanish-leather-covered walls and relics too many and too old to enumerate.

But on to Trefriw and from Trefriw climb the hill on foot,—it is only a short hill,—to see Llanrhychwyn Church, a double-aisled church of the most primitive simplicity, where Prince Llewelyn used in tumultuous days to worship. One aisle is considerably older than the other, dating, as its architecture, the details of its rafters, the windows and doors show, perhaps back as far as the eighth century, surely the ninth. And now to Conway, stopping by the way at Caerhûn for just a glimpse of the old church there and a long enough time to realize that you are standing on the foundations of what was once the ancient Roman city of Canovium. Do not stay there so long that you will not have time to turn on a road just about a mile and a half outside of Conway that leads up the hill to Llangelynnin Church, also one of the oldest foundations in all Great Britain, a poor, stricken, old place tended by a woman scarcely strong enough to creep around, apart from any village or any cottages, remote,

Appendix

pathetic in its semi-decay, and containing still the old pulpit, some of the old glass, and a leper's window through which lepers used in the Middle Ages to receive the sacrament and to listen to the services.

And now you are almost within the harp-shaped castle walls of Conway itself — old Conway with its cobbled streets, its beautiful Plas Mawr, its ancient hostelrys, its massive castle with the oratory of Queen Eleanor still looking out upon the sea, and — treasure not to be despised — near the castle the tiniest cottage in all Great Britain. There are good hotels in Conway where an excellent luncheon or dinner may be found, and if there is time for sight-seeing, perhaps the best thing to do would be to buy one of Abel Heywood's penny guides, for in these penny guides is found a wealth of reliable information. Enough, this, for one day's joy, and I have discovered for you what no guide-book would do — two, and perhaps three, of the sweetest old churches of primitive Wales.

Leaving Bettws-y-Coed on the SECOND DAY, you will go through Capel Curig, stopping on the way for a glimpse of the Swallow Falls. Now, down through the valley past Llyn Ogwen, from which you can visit, if you wish, the Devil's Kitchen or Twll Ddu, the "black hole," as the Welsh call it, where, every year, foolish young collegians lose their lives in scaling the walls. In its lack of verdure, in its stupendous rocky mountain summits, in its gigantic boulders of

Appendix

stone thrown hither and yon, this valley is a veritable valley of the shadow of death, gray, desolate, rock-strewn. You will pass through Bethesda on your way to Bangor, seeing, as you go along, hillsides covered with rubbish from slate quarries. And now to Bangor, where Dr. Samuel Johnson over one hundred years ago found the inn, together with a great deal else in Wales, "very mean." Although the good Doctor was tremendously interested in his food, despite the very meanness of the inns, he found Bangor, its Beaumaris Castle, and its cathedral, interesting. But they have changed the "meanness" of their inns now, for this Welsh town has become a university town and you will find good food and good inns.

Only a few miles beyond is Carnarvon, — that old town which North Walians claim as the most interesting of all their towns, — and Carnarvon Castle, in the words of Pennant, "the most magnificent badge of our subjection to the English." There in Carnarvon the investitures of the Princes of Wales have taken place. Carnarvon Castle is, with the exception of Alnwick, the finest of all Great Britain and possessed of the romantic grace — its casements looking out upon the sea and the dim romantic shores of Anglesey and its towers back upon the rocky sides of Snowdon — of any European castle. Within the walls of this castle, begun by Edward I and completed by his son, the first English Prince of Wales, and within the walls of the town, — for Carnarvon is a city of the early

Appendix

Middle Ages founded upon the ancient city of the Romans called Segontium, — many hours, even days, might be spent.

Homewards now to Bettws through Llanberis, up the long, beautifully graded road to Pen-y-Pass (which means simply the head of the pass), where you will find an inn for mountaineers in whose attractive dining-room you can have delicious tea and a view unrivalled in all North Wales. From Pen-y-Pass one of the easiest ascents of Snowdon can be made, and, with Bettws as a centre, it would be a very simple thing to run down to Pen-y-Pass for an ascent. You are within a few miles of Bettws now and will reach there in time for supper or dinner at seven o'clock.

On the **THIRD DAY** go through Capel Curig again, turning at Pen-y-Gwryd, — where Charles Kingsley, the novelist, and Tom Hood spent so many happy days and where there is an excellent inn, — to go to Beddgelert. You will run down one of the most beautiful roads in Great Britain, wide, smooth, with all Snowdonia at your right-hand side, and on the left, mountains that roll away towards the jagged summit of Cynicht; down past beautiful Lake Gwynant; past beautiful country places; past Dinas Lake where a remarkable creature of mythological times is supposed to have lived — fairy tale seems to have made a sort of crocodile out of what was probably a beaver; — past Dinas Emrys, on which there are still remains of a

Appendix

Roman stronghold and where the magician Merlin Ambrosius worked many a spell and Arthur has often been; still on, past Aran, a mountain only less high than Snowdon, from whose side leaps a little waterfall; along a road with a turbulent Welsh river on one side and fawn-like, mottled beach trees on the other; now on to the outskirts of the village, where one begins to see signboards announcing lodgings, and finally, into the village of Beddgelert, set sheltered and surrounded in its cup of mountains, and where, if you have a heart for legend, you may see a dog's grave and believe the beautiful old tale; and where, if you have an eye for beauty, you may have your eyes filled — eat your cake, indeed, and take some of it away with you; — and where, if you have a mind to rest, you may stay on indefinitely, finding each day more peaceful and more lovely than the last in that little mountain-cupped village, with the sound of its running rivers and its tumbling mountain streams and the day-long cawing of its rooks. If you want a welcome from some one who loves Americans and who will do all that she can for them, you could not do better than go to Mrs. Howell Griffith Powell, who will give you excellent simple food and, if it is a cold day or you happen merely to want it as an added pleasure, an open fire. There are good hotels there, too, the Royal Goat Hotel and the Prince Llewelyn.

Then in the afternoon you will go on down through Aberglaslyn Pass. Perhaps you will stand on the old

Appendix

bridge for a few minutes and read or listen to the story of how the Devil — always a singularly active figure in Wales and the Welsh imagination — tried to get an unjust toll for the building of that bridge and was outwitted. The Welsh mind — and the revival is a point in proof — takes a singular delight in outwitting the Devil. Now, on to Tremadoc, where on the right-hand side of the road you will see the house in which Shelley, the poet, lived for a year with poor unhappy Harriet. From Portmadoc you can take a short *détour* to Harlech and its castle, a tremendous old pile of a fortress, scarcely beautiful, but very impressive as it stands upon its vast rock looking out over the sea and the mountains, and down over the little cottages sheltered at its foot. As you look across the sea, you are gazing upon the land where King Mark is supposed to have had his palace and upon Criccieth, where you may still see an old stub of a castle. Perhaps you will be even more interested to know that Lloyd George has his summer home in Criccieth, and that not far from Harlech, Bernard Shaw has spent a good deal of his time preparing his next delightfully wicked laugh at the expense of himself and mankind. Just opposite Harlech Castle is a good inn where one can get an ample dinner or luncheon or tea; and a car or one's walking-traps may be left.

Retracing a few miles from Harlech, follow the road through the beautiful Vale of Maentwrog. It was in the Vale of Maentwrog that Lord Lyttleton said,

Appendix

"One might with the woman one loves pass an age in this vale and think it but a day." Up through this wonderful vale you will see a tiny narrow-gauge railway making its way. Sharp is the contrast between the country at Festiniog, from which one looks down upon the Vale of Maentwrog, and the country about Blaenau Festiniog, which is the next town beyond. Blaenau Festiniog — high up on the mountain side, with the peaks of gray rock summits towering high above the village and rocks everywhere coming down to the backs of the houses, miles of slate rubbish within sight of every street in the village — has for its proud boast the fact that it contains the largest slate quarries in the world. Here are quarried the beautiful blue slates of which Wales is proud, and which, alas, the cheaper French slates have been driving out of the market. It is well worth the trouble to climb the quarry steps up the Oakeley Quarry. Then on through the Lledr Valley, with every turn of the road near the Lledr River, through plantations of pines, past little houses, down this beautifully graded road until the Lledr River joins the Conway, past the Fairy Glen, and so home once more to Bettws.

A FOURTH DAY should be spent in a more fertile part of the country following the Cerrig-y-Druidion road through to Corwen. A few miles farther on, along the river Dee, one comes to Llangollen, a sweet old town, where lived those two dear, high-spirited,

Appendix

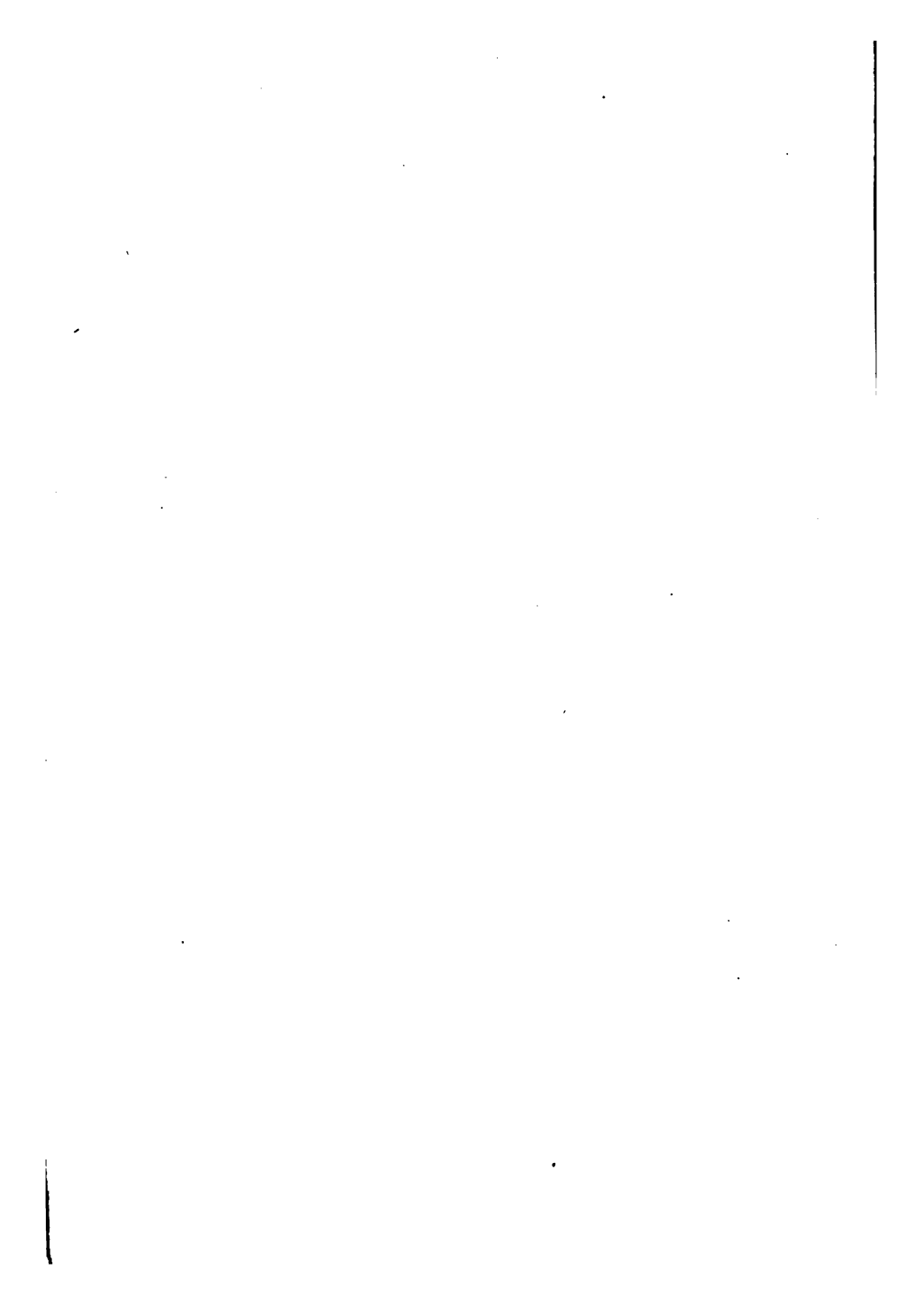
quaint old ladies of Llangollen ; where there are excellent inns in a fertile valley, good shops, a town Welsh to its finger tips, and an old abbey called Valle Crucis. One hears so much of Tintern Abbey on its southern English river, yet there is something about Valle Crucis which I think is no less lovely. More of a ruin it is, and in some ways more of a treasure. On the whole, it has fallen into greater dilapidation, but there are parts of it from which one can read much of a life that is past. There is a charming old chapter house almost intact ; a delightful old fishpond from which the monks, who had an eye for what was good to eat, took their carp ; and there are such graceful Norman chimneys and fireplaces as I do not remember having seen any place else ; and there, too, the old blind rector shows one the things which he cannot see any more, saying over and over as he guides one around, "I never destroy anything that is old." The restoration of this abbey is his work, his life, and before his sight went he had put into print such records of its past life that he had identified himself with its history for all time to come. Americans he loves, too, and you will give as well as get pleasure.

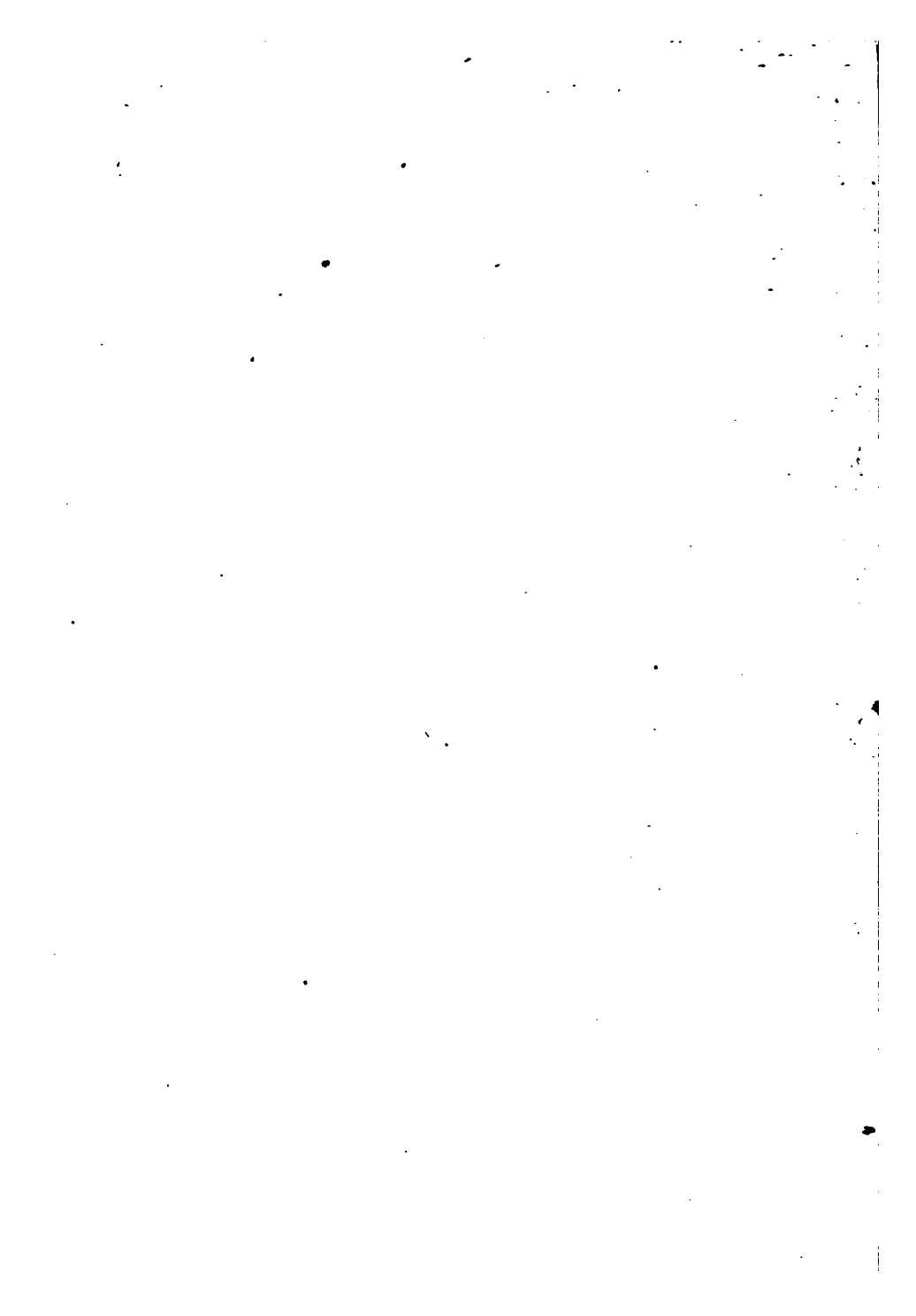
In conclusion, a few general suggestions. You would find it amply worth your while to motor over to Bala, or, if you are not motoring, to take the train over there. The lake is beautiful, accommodations are good, and one can, from Bala as a centre, make

Appendix

several short and most interesting trips : — one to Dolgelly, where Tennyson spent so many of his vacations ; another up to the quaint little town of Ruthin in which Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale) spent some little time and of which Mrs. Piozzi tells the charming story which I have repeated elsewhere. She was discussing with the caretaker of one of the little churches in the possession of the Thrale family her plans for her journey and mentioned that she was going to Ruthin. “Ruthin, mum,” he said, “my wife came from Ruthin, and when she died I made up my mind I’d go with the body to Ruthin, for I thought I would find it a pleasant journey, and indeed, mum, I found it a very pleasant journey.”

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE . MASSACHUSETTS
U . S . A





This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

DUE MAR 21 1929

AUG -5 1930